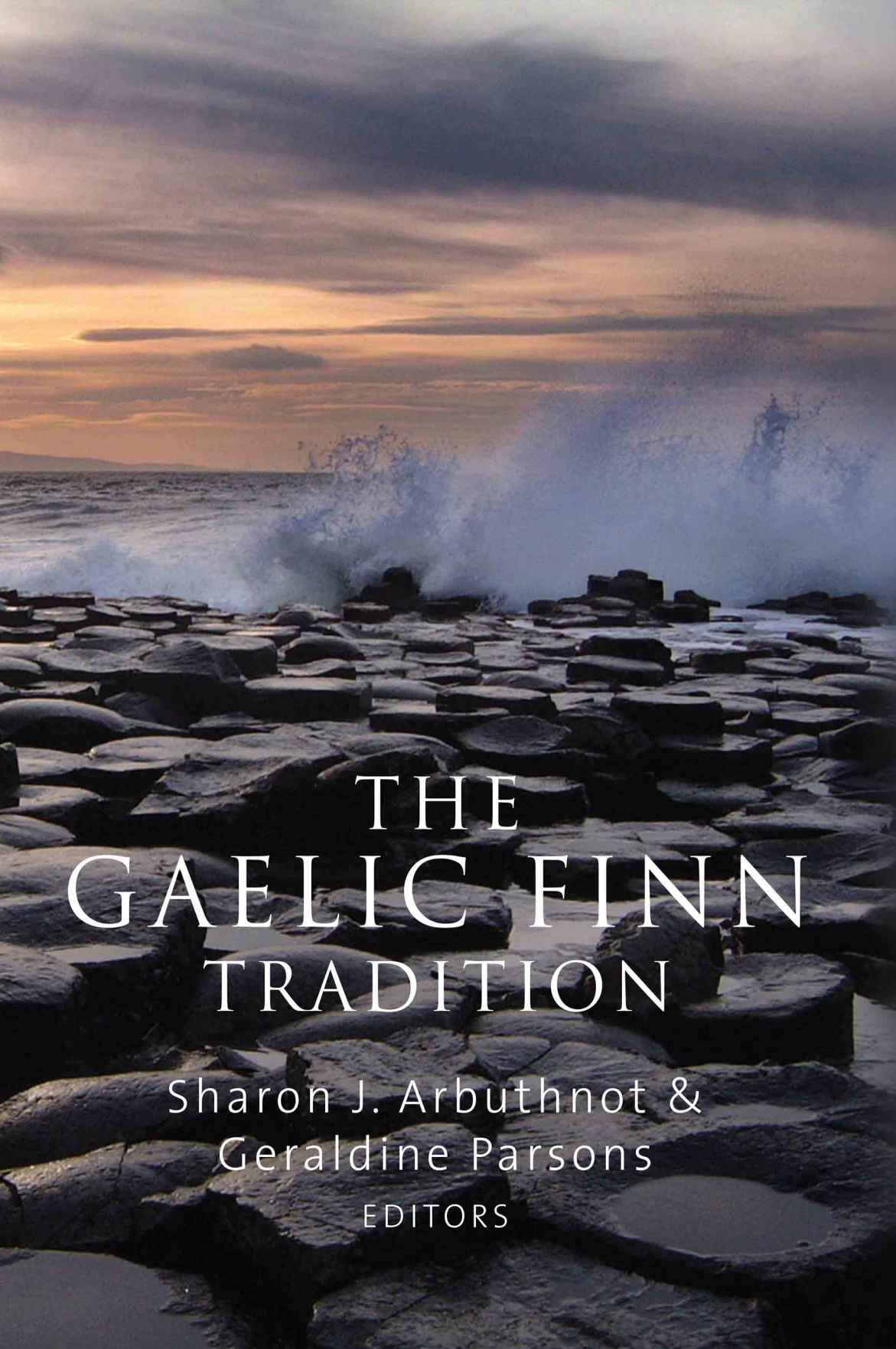

THE GAELIC FINN TRADITION

Sharon J. Arbuthnot &
Geraldine Parsons
EDITORS

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Abbreviations

AB	*Acallam bec*
AOP	*Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig*
AS	*Acallam na senórach*, the earlier version as edited by Stokes
AS II	*Agallamh na seanórach*, the later version as edited by Ní Shéaghdha
BL	British Library, London
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DIL	E.G. Quin (gen. ed.), *(Contributions to a) Dictionary of the Irish language* (Dublin, 1913–75)
NLI	National Library of Ireland, Dublin
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
RIA	Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin
UCD	University College, Dublin

Terminology and orthography

The longevity of the Finn Cycle means that characters, tale-titles and other terms characteristic of the corpus can appear in a variety of orthographic forms or transliterations. These terms appear below in forms appropriate to the period under discussion in any particular essay. Thus, in material dealing with the medieval period we have employed the forms *Finn*, *mac Cumaill*, *fían/fíana*, *fíanaigecht*, *Caílte*, and so on, while in that concerned with the early modern period we have employed *Fionn*, *mac Cumhaill*, *fianna*, *fiannaigheacht*, *Caoilte*, and so on. In the introductory material and the indices, the earlier forms are employed. The spelling '*Acallam na senórach*' is used to refer to the earliest extant text known by that name; the later version is referred to as '*Agallamh na seanórach*'. '*Acallam bec*' is the preferred spelling of the name of that tale. In order to avoid confusion, however, after the first occurrence in each essay, titles are abbreviated to *AS*, *AS* II and *AB*. For the same reason, the abbreviation *AOP* is used to refer to *Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig*.

Introduction

The longevity and ubiquity of literature centred around the figure of Finn mac Cumaill is well-known. Among the Celtic literatures, only the Arthurian corpus has had a greater impact and, like the material about Arthur, poems and tales about Finn have demonstrated an appeal that crosses the boundaries of centuries, languages and media. While there is evidence of a sustained tradition beginning in the seventh century,[1] from the thirteenth century onwards that part of the Gaelic imagination that was occupied with storytelling seems to have been saturated with ideas about Finn and his warrior-band, the *fían*.[2] Even as the infrastructure of Gaelic writing disintegrated in the modern period, Finn and his companions retained their popularity as a subject for composition. Hence, a substantial amount of the oral literature of Ireland and Scotland recorded in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is *fianaigecht* material.[3] In Scotland, Finn, as Fingal, also flourished as a character in the Anglophone literature of the eighteenth century, when James Macpherson produced his controversial 'Ossianic' texts.[4] Via Macpherson and the Romantic movement, Finn crossed further linguistic and cultural thresholds. For a time, his pre-eminence in the Gaelic mind was replicated across Europe, a phenomenon exemplified by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's interest in Macpherson's Fingal and Ossian.[5] An English-language literature about Finn took root in Ireland too, notably in the early twentieth century when a number of authors, including W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Austin Clarke and Flann O'Brien, drew on the tradition.[6]

In view of their position at the head of this extraordinary tradition, it is striking that the Gaelic Finn texts have not received the level of academic scrutiny that they would seem to demand. The number of modern, book-length, crit-

1 K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Fianaigecht* (1910). **2** As examples of the poetic tradition see J.F. Campbell (ed.), *Leabhar na Feinne* (1872); E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53); N. Ross (ed.), *Heroic poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (1939). Examples of the prose/prosimetric tradition include W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), 1–438; M. Joynt (ed.), *Feis tighe Chonáin* (1936); N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Agallamh na seanórach*, 3 vols (1942–5); N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967); C. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Cath Finntrágha* (1975). **3** On the oral *fianaigecht* tradition see, for example, Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, iii, pp lxx–xvii; Murphy, *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales of medieval Ireland* (1971), pp 54–61. **4** *The poems of Ossian and related works*, ed. H. Gaskill with an introduction by F. Stafford (1996). On Scottish Anglophone writing concerning Finn which predates Macpherson see J. MacKillop, *Fionn mac Cumhaill* (1986), pp 69–79. **5** See H. Gaskill (ed.), *The reception of Ossian in Europe* (2004), especially P. Barnaby, 'Timeline of Ossian's European reception', pp xxi–lxviii, and C. Ó Dochartaigh, 'Goethe's translation from the Gaelic Ossian', pp 156–75. **6** See, for example, MacKillop, *Fionn mac Cumhaill*, chs 4 and 5.

ical studies of the vernacular material is low.[7] However, given that the usual medium for the criticism of medieval Celtic literature is the article or essay, it is perhaps the scarcity of collections of shorter studies that is truly surprising. The present volume is only the third volume of essays solely devoted to the Gaelic Finn tradition and only the second to be published in English: it follows its successors after gaps of around twenty-five and fifteen years respectively.[8]

Quite apart from the long hiatus since the last volume of essays on the Finn material, we believe that this is a timely collection for three chief reasons. First, new editions and translations of key texts have appeared in recent years, generating fresh interest and facilitating secondary study.[9] The rise in scholarly concern with the central text, *Acallam na senórach*, for example, as evidenced in a clutch of articles published over the past decade,[10] is doubtless to be associated with the publication of a new translation in 1999.[11] Another reason behind our decision to

7 J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985); D. Ó hÓgáin, *Fionn mac Cumhaill* (1988); MacKillop, *Fionn mac Cumhaill*. A shorter work is Murphy, *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales*. **8** B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987) [also published as *Béaloideas*, 54/55 (1986–7), and as B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *The heroic process* (1987), pp 1–264]; P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Fhiannaíocht* (1995). J. Carey (ed.), *Duanaire Finn* (2003) is a valuable, but more narrowly focussed, collection of essays. **9** For example, J. Carey (trans.), '*Tochmarc Ailbe*: the wooing of Ailbe' in A. Bourke et al. (eds), *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing,* iv (2002), pp 206–10; N. White (ed. and trans.), *Compert Mongáin and three other early Mongán tales* (2006), pp 73–4 and 79–81; P. Russell, 'Poets, power and possessions in medieval Ireland: some stories from *Sanas Cormaic*' in J.F. Eska (ed.), *Law, literature and society* (2008), pp 9–45 at 39–40; D. Ó Murchadha (ed. and trans.), *Lige Guill* (2009). **10** Studies exclusively or largely concerned with the *Acallam* and/or *Agallamh na seanórach* include R. McTurk, '*Acallam na senórach* and Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*' in S. Ó Catháin (ed.), *Northern lights* (2001), pp 178–89; S. Ó Coileáin, 'The setting of *Géisid cúan*' in J. Carey et al. (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile* (2004), pp 234–48; A. Dooley, 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse,* 34 (2004), 97–126; J.F. Nagy, 'Not the practice of games' in B. Smelik et al. (eds), *A companion in linguistics* (2005), pp 121–6; idem, 'Life in the fast lane: the *Acallam na senórach*' in H. Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic literature and society* (2005), pp 117–31; idem, '*Acallam na senórach*: a tri-cycle' in D.M. Wiley (ed.), *Early Irish king tales* (2008), pp 68–83; M. Harmon, 'The *Colloquy of the old men*: shape and substance' in P.A. Lynch et al. (eds), *Back to the present, forward to the past*, ii (2006), pp 123–34; S.J. Arbuthnot, 'On the name Oscar and two little-known episodes involving the *fían*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 51 (2006), 67–81; eadem, 'Medieval etymology, knives, Scone and Skene', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 23 (2007), 1–20; T. Ó Con Cheanainn, 'Dhá shliabh i gcríocha imill Chonnacht agus na Mumhan atá luaite in *Agallamh na seanórach*', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 113 (2008), 53–5; D. Ó Murchadha, 'Kerry place-names in two twelfth-century poems', *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, Series 2, 8 (2008), 74–86; G. Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 55 (2008), 11–39; eadem, '*Acallam na senórach* as prosimetrum', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 24/25 (2009), 86–100; A. Donahue, 'The *Acallam na senórach*: a medieval instruction manual', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 24/25 (2009), 206–15; D. Schlüter, '"For the entertainment of lords and commons of later times": past and remembrance in *Acallam na senórach*', *Celtica*, 26 (2010), 146–60. **11** A. Dooley & H. Roe (trans.), *Tales of the elders of Ireland* (1999).

solicit individual studies at this juncture is that sufficient time has now elapsed since the 1980s, the most vibrant period yet in the study of Finn tradition, to make it desirable for scholars to reflect on, and expand or challenge, views advanced at that time. The contributors to this collection include the authors of seminal studies from the 1980s: Kim McCone and Joseph Falaky Nagy. Appearing alongside them are those who helped to shape the course of *fianaigecht* studies in the 1990s (Caoimhín Breatnach, Ann Dooley, Anja Gunderloch, Mícheál Mac Craith, Ruairí Ó hUiginn) and in the 2000s (Sharon Arbuthnot, Julia Kühns, Kevin Murray, Síle Ní Mhurchú, Geraldine Parsons). Finally, this volume also responds to a recently revitalized trend to investigate medieval Gaelic literature within the parameters of the cycle. Recent years have seen two international conferences on the Ulster Cycle,[12] a volume of essays on the King Tales,[13] and a consideration of the cycle as a classificatory model in an Irish context.[14] Among the articles which follow here are two in particular which address the medieval evidence for the concept of a cycle about Finn. One is Geraldine Parsons' contribution which comprises both a survey of a number of texts dealing with the death of Finn mac Cumaill and a discussion of how the ways in which *Acallam na senórach* engages with contemporary tradition surrounding Finn's death may point to a 'cyclic mentality' on the part of its author. Kevin Murray's starting-point is the vexed question of the dating of the medieval corpus of *fianaigecht* material, but he notes that establishing the full extent of the early Finn Cycle will be as important a task as dating it.

As might be expected, *Acallam na senórach* recurs as the subject of several contributions. Ann Dooley takes as her theme the interaction between the *Acallam* and its sources; she suggests that materials drawn from Patrician hagiography and saints' Lives are put to use in commenting on cultural and political issues in Ireland in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Joseph Falaky Nagy, meanwhile, explores the *Acallam*'s treatment of the problem of social breakdown and has important points to make about the role of Caílte in bonding, not just the *fian*, but also this heterogeneous narrative. Moving beyond the well-known earliest version of the *Acallam*, Julia Kühns offers a rare and welcome glimpse into the hitherto-neglected *Acallam bec*. Her contribution includes not only a new edition and translation of sections of the text but also a collation of the baptism scene in the *Acallam bec* with corresponding matter in *Acallam na senórach* and the later *Agallamh na seanórach*.

Although the *Acallam* is given considerable space in this volume, studies of other *fianaigecht* texts are not lacking. The manuscript tradition of *Tóruigheacht*

A lesser-known, recent translation is M. Harmon (trans.), *The colloquy of the old men* (2001). See also A. Dooley (trans.), '*Acallam na Senórach* (The colloquy of the ancients)' in Bourke et al., *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing*, pp 228–33. **12** For the proceedings of the first see R. Ó hUiginn & B. Ó Catháin (eds), *Ulidia, 2* (2009). **13** Wiley, *Early Irish king tales* (2008). **14** E. Poppe, *Of cycles and other critical matters* (2008). Another recent 'cyclic' approach to the Ulster Cycle is T.O. Clancy, 'King, court and justice in the Ulster Cycle' in Fulton, *Medieval Celtic literature and society*, pp 163–82.

Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne is investigated by Caoimhín Breatnach. This important study suggests that the earliest surviving copy of the tale (in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 24 P 9) may be an abridgment of the original narrative. Síle Ní Mhúrchu and Anja Gunderloch are both concerned with issues of textual amalgamation and growth. The former argues that *Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig* is not merely a casual aggregation of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and ten other lays and calls for a reconsideration of how these lays are presented in published collections. The latter examines Duncan Kennedy's own additions to the material he collected in the second half of the eighteenth century and concludes that some represent a pastiche of the ballad style, while others are best seen as a Gaelic approximation to Macpherson's writings.

With Duncan Kennedy we enter the realm of Gaelic Scotland. Ruairí Ó hUiginn embarks on a more dramatic journey which stretches from Ireland to Spanish Flanders. He is concerned with how political factors, including seventeenth-century Irish nationalism, shaped the transmission of *fianaigecht* texts there. Like Ó hUiginn, Mícheál Mac Craith is interested in Counter-Reformation Irish literary activity, showing how *fianaigecht* tradition might underpin Tadhg Ó Cianáin's response to a series of frescoes on the life of S. Onuphrius. A fascinating counterpart to Mac Craith's essay is provided by Kaarina Hollo's investigation of eucharistic and other Christian symbolism in the closing tableau of the Old-Irish tale popularly known as 'Finn and the man in the tree'. She argues that a satisfactory reading of this tale can be achieved only if we take account of the ecclesiastical milieu in which it was written.

It remains to mention two contributions which embrace issues of terminology and etymology in the pursuit of very different ends. Kim McCone draws on a range of sources – linguistic, documentary and iconographic – to trace the early Irish social institution of the *fían* back over four millennia. Along the way, his discussion takes in a radical, new derivation for the term *fían*. Finally, Sharon Arbuthnot seeks to explain why the account of the death of (Lugaid) Mac Con in the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* departs in key aspects from that in *Scéla Moshauluim* but first has to wrestle with issues such as the meaning of *rincne* and its suggested derivation from Latin *quinque*.

In addition to thanking the contributors, we wish to record our sincere gratitude to a number of institutions and individuals whose assistance was invaluable in the publication of this volume and in the organization of the conference which underlies it.[15] The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Conference Series Fund, administered by Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge, generously funded the conference '*Fíanaigecht* Studies: twenty years a-growing', held at the University of Cambridge on 4–5 April 2009. The Fellows' Research Fund of

15 Included here is the contribution of Julia Kühns who was unable to attend the conference.

Trinity College, Cambridge, provided a substantial grant-in-aid of publication. A grant from The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland made the inclusion of colour images possible. We are grateful too to Mr Martin Fanning of Four Courts Press for his enthusiastic support of this work. Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh is due particular thanks for her assistance in numerous ways before and during the conference.

We hope that this volume will be of use to a wide range of readers and that it will contribute to the ongoing emergence of *Fíanaigecht* Studies as a distinct and fruitful area of research within the field of Celtic Studies.

Sharon J. Arbuthnot
Queen's University, Belfast

Geraldine Parsons
University of Glasgow
February 2011

The Celtic and Indo-European origins of the *fían*

Kim McCone

Although endorsed by Lily Weiser,[1] Heinrich Zimmer's opinion that the *fiana* of medieval Irish literature had been simply modelled upon Viking raiders had already been rendered untenable by Kuno Meyer's important study.[2] One obvious and fatal objection is that the oldest firmly datable mention of a *fían* was made by Tírechán well over a century before the first Norse attacks upon Ireland: 'I am the son of Mac Cais son of Glas and was swineherd (*subulcus*) of Lugir, king of Irúath. The *fían* of the son of Mac Con (*fían maicc Maic Con*) killed me in the reign of Cairbre Nia Fer'.[3] Meyer cautioned that 'even so late as the tenth century Finn and his *fiana* were only one among several well-known similar bands'.[4] He then expressed regret that:

> many of those who have written on the origin and development of the Ossianic cycle have based their investigations almost exclusively upon the tradition of the twelfth and following centuries, quite forgetting or ignoring the fact that this later phase is preceded by centuries of gradual growth from small and obscure beginnings, in which Finn and his *fiana* do not play the part assigned to them by the later and modern legend.[5]

Meyer was primarily concerned with a relatively restricted surviving early medieval corpus as the antecedent of the major post-Norman literary genre commonly termed *fianaigecht*. The present paper also takes the pre-Norman period as its starting-point but will concentrate upon the *fían* as an early Irish social institution with a long prehistory that can be traced back some four millennia through ancient Celtic to Proto-Indo-European times. Meyer delineated its basic nature as follows:

> In its stricter sense *fían* denoted a larger or smaller band of roving warriors, who had joined for the purpose of making war on their own account. This was called *dul for fianas* … They were, however, not mere

1 *Altgermanische Jünglingsweihen und Männerbünde* (1927), pp 64–6. **2** *Fianaigecht* (1910). **3** L. Bieler (ed. and trans.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (1979), p. 154. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own. **4** *Fianaigecht*, p. xv. **5** Ibid.

> robbers or marauders. Indeed their mode of warfare was considered honourable and lawful, and is so recognized in the laws. They were often men expelled from their clan (*éclaind*), or landless men (*díthir*), sons of kings who had quarrelled with their fathers, men proclaimed, or men who seized this means to avenge some wrong by taking the law into their own hands. Though it might not be pleasant to come across them, and though the Church had little good to say of them …, they were by no means held in abhorrence … and their existence was even considered essential to the welfare of the community. Thus in the Instructions of Cormac, §3, 23, among the institutions which are best for a tribe, *fíana* are enumerated, though it is added that they should be 'without overbearing' (*cen díummus*).[6]

This picture can be modified and filled out somewhat with the help of a small selection of significant references, set out below, to the *fían* and its attributes in a variety of pre-Norman Irish sources. The recurring juxtaposition *o(a)ic fé(i)ne* in (i) and (iii) below points to a predominantly youthful membership. A life chiefly spent in the wilds is also indicated in (i), which is preserved in a ninth-century manuscript and looks very much like a charm connected with a game of chance to determine which of two eligible heirs, presumably brothers, will inherit the family estate (the loser being destined to an evidently propertiless existence as the member of a *fían*).[7] The incompatibility of landowning with status as a *féinnid* ('member of a *fían*') is expressed still more clearly in (ii), and such a person's typical lack of family connections, whether with his parents, siblings and more distant kin or in the form his own offspring, emerges from the applicability of the tag *é-cland* ('kinless') to him, as in (iii). The church's disapproval of the institution in the early Middle Ages has been demonstrated, from saints' Lives above all, by Richard Sharpe.[8] It is further illustrated in (iv) by the thoroughly negative profile of *fíanas* in the seventh- or early eighth-century *Aipgitir chrábaid* as well as by the reference in (v) to its practitioners as *maic báis* ('sons of death') in the Annals of Ulster. Crucially, the latter shows that the *fían* was still a social reality as late as the mid-ninth century AD, notwithstanding clerical hostility towards it.

> (i) 'May a spectre (*síabair*) come to my wolf-/hound-tryst (*con-dál*) with grain and dairy produce (*ith 7 mlicht*) of that for which I cast it [*crann* 'lot' understood?]. If I am lucky, may it be grain and dairy produce (*ith 7 mlicht*) that I see. If I am not lucky, may it be wolves (*coin altai*) and deer and wandering around mountains and youths of the *fían* (*oaic féne*) that I see.'[9]

6 Ibid., p. ix. **7** K. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present* (1990), pp 207–9. **8** 'Hiberno-Latin *laicus*, Irish *láech* and the devil's men', *Ériu*, 30 (1979), 75–92. **9** W. Stokes & J. Strachan

(ii) *fénnid cách co trebad* 'everyone is a *fían* member until he becomes a property owner'.[10]

(iii) 'A pair of young *fían*-warriors (*dias oac féne*) came to Emain Machae, two kinless ones (*da é-cland*), two strong men (*da thrénfer*). A scissor-shorn head of jet-black hair (*máel demis chirdub*) on each of them … Upon them was a shield (*scíath*) on the neck of each … A serrated soldier's spear (*sleg*) in the hand of each … Their two swords (*a nda claideb*) were as big as a weaver's beam.'[11]

(iv) '*Fían*-activity (*fíanas*) causes four things to a man – it contracts territories, it increases enmities, it cuts short life, it increases torments.'[12]

(v) 'A large *fían*-band (*fían-lach már*) of sons of death (*di maccaib báis*) who were invading kingdoms (*oc indriud na túath*) after the fashion of heathens (*more gentilium*).'[13]

A palpable aversion on the part of the monastic men of letters responsible for the early medieval Irish texts that have come down to us seems also to have resulted in a rather oblique or even obfuscatory approach to the *fían* in much of this material, particularly the law-tracts. For instance, although otherwise characterized by great clarity of exposition, the Old-Irish text on status entitled *Críth gablach* displays a notable deficiency in this regard when discussing two of the social grades it recognizes, namely, the *fer midbad* ('man of "middle" (or perhaps rather "mead") huts') and the *aire échta* ('nobleman of slaughter'), in (vi) and (vii) below respectively. It is hardly a coincidence that connections with a *fían* seem at least probable in both cases.

(vi) 'Why is this man called a *fer midbad*? Because he has come from childhood (*a mmaici*), from the law of fosterage (*a ddligiud altruma*), and has not reached manhood (*fertaid*). Is a particular age assigned to the *fer midbad* who swears concerning penalties (*imma:thung smachtu*)? An age of fourteen years is assigned. The reason he cannot maintain testimony is that he who has not already taken property (*seilb*) or inheritance (*comarbus*) is not capable of testimony except regarding every trifle before seventeen years, unless a free adult maintain it with him.'[14]

(ed. and trans.), *Thesaurus palæohibernicus*, ii (1903), p. 293. **10** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *The instructions of King Cormac mac Airt* (1909), §31, 10. **11** R.I. Best & M.A. O'Brien (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, v (1967), ll. 33429–42 (*Fochond loingse Fergusa meic Roig*). **12** V. Hull (ed. and trans.), '*Apgitir chrábaid*: the alphabet of piety', *Celtica*, 8 (1968), 44–89 at 72, §25. **13** S. Mac Airt & G. Mac Niocaill (ed. and trans.), *The Annals of Ulster* (1983), s.a. AD 847. Cf. *fianlaige* '*fían*-bands' in the entry for AD 818. **14** D.A. Binchy (ed.), *Críth gablach* (1941), §6.

> The higher *fer midbad* 'who maintains testimony (*con:oí insci*)' is ascribed an age 'from fourteen years to twenty, to beard-encirclement. Though it be that he acquire the estate of a cow-freeman (*bó-aire*) before he have an encircling beard, his oath does not avail except according to the oath of a *fer midbad*. Moreover, though he be without taking inheritance until old age (*cen gabáil n-orbai … co crínî*), his oath still does not go beyond the *fer midbad*. His fief is five *séts* [= two-and-a-half milch cows], his food-render a wether with its accessories. This is the food-render of a "sole kin" (*óen-chiniud*), a man (*fer*) who does not occupy/cultivate[15] property (*seilb*) or land (*ferann*) for himself … No one is allowed to set up his house (*fothud a thige*) as long as he is a minor until he is capable of separate landowning (*sain-trebad*) and of taking possessions (*gabál selb*), [and this applies to] a *fer midbad* as long as he be an *óenchiniud*, except his lord be counterbound. If the property of his house increase until it is the property of a cow-freeman (*bó-aire*) or something higher, the due of his fore-purchase increases to him until the render of his house accords to his rank'.[16]

> (vii) 'The *aire échta*, why is he so called? Because he is the lord of a band of five (*aire cóicir*) that is left to perform slaughter in allied territory (*i cairddiu*) until the end of a month to avenge the dishonour of a kingdom (*túath*) against whom recent homicide is committed. If they have not accomplished it by the end of a month, they enter upon an agreement that their protection will not adhere any longer. Though the same band of five have slaughtered men from the allied territory, the *aire échta* can pay on their behalf that neither land nor bronze cauldron is forfeit for it but only vessels to the value of a cow. He then brings them out to the end of the allied territory for their reception according to the extent of his and his friends' protection. His retinue and maintenance are due as for an *aire déso*'.[17]

The term *fer midbad* obviously designated someone betwixt and between in relation to the termination of fosterage at the age of fourteen and the full attainment of manhood no earlier than the age of twenty. However, two quite different types are covered in what looks like a deliberate fudge. One is an *óenchinniud* or 'sole kin' who not only bears a name reminiscent of the 'kinless' *écland* but also displays the lack of property characteristic of a *fían*-member. He is fated to remain a *fer midbad* until such time as he acquire sufficient wealth or, failing that, until his death by virtue of being 'without obtaining inheritance until old age'. The other category is a youth who has come into property before

15 *nad:treba*, the verb belonging to the verbal noun *trebad* in (ii) above. **16** Binchy, *Críth gablach*, §9. See also McCone, *Pagan past*, pp 203–5. **17** Binchy, *Críth gablach*, §25. See also McCone, *Pagan past*, pp 211–12.

the age of twenty and would automatically move from this to a higher status in his twentieth year. It thus appears that there was a minimum age of twenty, as well as an essential property qualification, for attainment of full membership of settled society. A tendency to make this transition as soon as possible presumably explains the preponderantly young age of the typically propertiless and unmarried members of a *fían*, while failure to meet the property requirement would account for the existence of some considerably older *féinnidi*.

The passage in (viii) employs three key terms that have already been considered in the context of a fierce fight, the *óenchinnidi* playing a particularly prominent role as wild, naked warriors rendered irresistible by an onset of battle-frenzy. In the passages in (ix), from the saga *Togail bruidne Da Derga*, an explicit connection is made between *fían*-warriors and the murderous raiding activity known as *díberg*, a term also applied, according to (xii), to certain emblems worn by its practitioners, who might also sport a peculiar haircut as in (iii) above. While also mentioning a sword, the same passage characterizes their main weapons as a spear and a shield, the components of the *gaisced*, or set of arms presented to a young warrior about to set out on his first expedition, in (x) and (xi). Statements in (ix) and elsewhere indicate that *féinnidi* and *díberga* or *díbergaig* were first and foremost young aristocrats, whence presumably the description of kings' sons as 'sons of death' put into St Brigit's mouth in (xii). They were prone to be equated with wolves and, on occasion, might be depicted as lacking a normally paired body-part such as a leg, an arm and, above all, an eye, as illustrated in (xiii) to (xv).

> (viii) 'The wounded young warriors (*ind óic athgoíti*) were brought out of the fort on stretchers … The young warriors (*ind óic*) set about destroying the fort but they could manage nothing of it … said Ailill son of Mata: "Bad for the honour of the Ulsterman now is the fact that the three kinless ones/warriors (*na tri eclaind*) of them have fallen and they do not take vengeance for it …" Thereupon, the "sole kinsmen" of the Ulstermen (*anchinnidi Ulad*) arise and they naked (*7 siat lomnochta*) and they launch a mighty, violent attack with great wrath and rage, so that they brought the lintel down until it was in the middle of the courtyard.'[18]

> (ix) 'He (Conaire) was then fostered in this way … and the other lads were fostered with him, i.e., Fer Lé, Fer Gar and Fer Rogein, the three sons of Dond Désa, the *fían*-warrior (*féinnid*).'[19] 'Let reaving (*díberg*) not be undertaken in your reign.'[20] 'Then his foster-brothers complained about being deprived of the profession of their father and grandfather,

18 R.I. Best & O. Bergin (eds), *Lebor na hUidre* (1929), ll. 1594–608 (*Táin bó Flidais*). **19** E. Knott (ed.), *Togail bruidne Da Derga* (1936), §9. **20** Ibid., §16.

i.e., robbery, plunder, killing people and reaving (*gat 7 brat 7 guin 7 daíne díberg*).'[21] 'Thereafter arrogance and greed seized them. They took up reaving (*díberg*) with sons of the nobles of Ireland around them. Three fifties of men (were) being instructed by them when they were behaving as wolves (*oc fáelad*) in the territory of the Connachtmen.'[22] 'The reavers (*díbergaig* "practitioners of *díberg*") leaped onto Trácht Fuirbthin and bring a stone per man with them to make a cairn, for that was the characteristic practice of the warbands (*fíana*) at the start.'[23]

(x) '"It is a custom of you Ulstermen," said Cet "that every lad (*mac*) who takes up arms (*gaibes gaisced*) among you makes us his goal."'[24]

(xi) 'He [Cú Chulainn] comes to Conchobor to seek arms (*do chuingid gaiscid*). Conchobor says: "Who has told you to?" "My papa Cathbad." "We know him, indeed," says Conchobor. He gives him spear and shield (*gaí 7 scíath*).'[25]

(xii) 'All of the common people serve God … but the sons of kings (*filii … regum*) are serpents and sons of bloodlettings and sons of death (*filii sanguinum filiique mortis*; cf. (v) above) apart from a few chosen by God.'[26]

(xiii) 'There was a certain man in Ulster territory in Patrick's time, Macuil moccu Greccae, and this man was an exceedingly impious cruel tyrant, so that he was called a cyclops (*ut cyclops nominaretur*) … Such were the depths of impiety to which he was inclined that, sitting one day in a mountainous, wild and high place in Druim moccu Echach, where he daily exercised his tyranny by taking up most wicked signs of cruelty (*signa* [glossed *s.l. diberca*] *sumens nequissima crudelitatis*) and slaying passers by with cruel criminality, he also saw … Patrick … and thought to kill him.'[27]

(xiv) 'When they reached the high sea they encountered Ingcél Cáech and Éiccel and Tulchinne, three descendants of Conmac of Britain, on the raging sea. An ungentle, big, terrifying, strange looking man was Ingcél. A single eye (*óen-súil*) in his head as broad as an oxhide and as black as smoke and three pupils in it. Thirteen hundred in their reaving band (*fo churp a díbergae*). The Irish reavers (*díbergaig*) were more numerous than they.'[28]

21 Ibid., §18. **22** Ibid., §20. **23** Ibid., §67. **24** R. Thurneysen (ed.), *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó* (1935), §9. **25** C. O'Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin bó Cúailnge: Recension 1* (1976), ll. 616–21. **26** S. Connolly, '*Vita prima Sanctae Brigitae*: background and historical value', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 119 (1989), 5–49 at 31, §62, 3. **27** Bieler, *The Patrician texts*, p. 102 (Muirchú, *Vita Patricii*). **28** Knott, *Togail bruidne Da Derga*, §44 = Best & Bergin,

> (xv) 'Cumall fell at the hand of Goll son of Morna. Luchet wounded him in his visage so that it destroyed his eye so that it is from that the name Goll ("blind in one eye") stuck to him … Goll killed Luchet.'[29]

It remains to note that the size of *fían*-bands varies considerably in early Irish sources, ranging from small groups of five or so up to larger ones of a hundred or even several hundreds and, on occasion, a thousand or more. One might expect the task in hand to have been a significant factor and, indeed, that is precisely the implication of King Cormac's alleged reply in (xvi) below to his son's question about his deeds as a young man. It is to be noted that, after taking the baby Cormac from the she-wolf into his own fosterage in *Genemuin Chormaic*, Lugnae prophesies that among other things 'he will be a *fían*-warrior'.[30]

> (xvi) 'I used to kill a pig, I used to follow a track when I was alone; I used to march against a band (*cuire*) of five when I was one of five; I was ready for slaughter when I was one of ten; I was ready for raiding when I was one of twenty; I was ready for battle when I was one of a hundred. These were my deeds.'[31]

Early Irish *díberga* or *fiana* sometimes appear in the service of a king or his subjects, as in the cases of the *féinnid* responsible for order in the king's house in *Críth gablach*,[32] Conall's retinue in the first Life of St Brigit[33] or the *aire échta* mentioned in (vii), who prosecutes an extra-territorial blood-feud with a band of five men on behalf of his own people and provides a gloss for *díbergach* in the legal tract *Bretha crólige*.[34] However, more often than not, they are represented as in conflict with a king or kings and with settled society at large, as in (v), (ix) and (xiii). Meyer stated: 'I have no doubt that the bands of *Scotti* who made common cause with the Picts in the third and fourth centuries in harrassing Roman Britain were also called *fiana*'.[35] He may well have been right about the nature of at least a significant portion of the Irish raiders and settlers involved, although this claim can be no more than speculation in the absence of firm evidence either for or against it.

Meyer discounted support for a strong or unlenited /N/, optionally written double in Old and Middle Irish, at the end of the word *fían(n)*, which he equated with an erstwhile Lat. **vena* underlying *venari* 'to hunt'.[36] However, the preform **ɣēnā*, thus implied, would have yielded OIr. **fín* and not *fían(n)*. The lat-

Lebor na hUidre, ll. 6863–8. **29** Best & Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, ll. 3176–83 (*Fotha catha Cnucha*). **30** V. Hull (ed.), '*Geneamuin Chormaic*', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 79–85 at l. 57. **31** Meyer, *The instructions of King Cormac*, p. 18, §8. **32** Binchy, *Críth gablach*, l. 591. **33** Connolly, '*Vita prima Sanctae Brigitae*', 31, §64. **34** D.A. Binchy (ed. and trans.), '*Bretha crólige*', *Ériu*, 12 (1938), 1–77 at §51. **35** *Fianaigecht*, p. xv. **36** Ibid., pp v–vi.

ter can be derived from **ɣeɟH-neh₂* (PIE **ɣeɟH-* 'chase, pursue' seen in Lith. *výti* 'chase', OInd. *viy-ánti* 'they pursue') and compared with OCS *vojьna* 'war' < **ɣoɟH-neh₂* only if it contained weak or lenited *-n* /n/. In the probable event of final *-n(n)* /N/, the only plausible derivation is < **wēd-nā* with the same element as seen in OIr. *fíad* 'wild, game', MW *guyd*, OBret. *guoid-* 'wild' < **wēd(w)-o-* (< **ɣeɟdʰ-*; cf. OEng. *wāð* 'hunt' < **ɣoɟHdʰ-*), evidently related to OIr. *fid* 'wood', OW/Bret. *guid* 'trees' < **wid-u-*. It is to be noted that OIr. *Goídil* 'Gael' was almost certainly borrowed from a British derivative of this word for 'wild' appearing as MW *Guoidel*, pl. *Guydyl* 'Irishman/-men'. *Fían(n)*, then, was derived, in all likelihood, from **wēd-* 'wild' by means of a collective suffix **-nā* and, as such, will have meant something like 'wild bunch'.

The use of a different derivative of the same root **wēd-* to designate Irishmen in British was presumably due, in the first instance, to the fierce incursions from Ireland recorded by the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus,[37] in the later fourth century AD, and also by St Patrick in the opening of his Confession not long afterwards. Although this provides some support for Meyer's aforementioned identification of these raiding *Scot(t)i* with *féinnidi*, it seems doubtful whether their warrior-bands were designated at so early a date by a direct precursor of the Irish word *fían(n)*, which cannot be traced back to a pre-Irish phase in the absence of precise cognates elsewhere. Moreover, there are good grounds for regarding it as a relatively late replacement within Irish of an older term for the entity in question, namely, *cuire* ('warband'), occurring in (xvi) above, as well as in early poems embedded in genealogies: e.g., the compound name *Fían-chuire*,[38] the *cuire* of the famous warrior Nia Corb son of Cú Chorb,[39] the *túath cuire* ('folk of bands') on a large marine expedition led by the legendary *fían*-figures Finn, Taulchae and Caílte who are described as *condai* ('hound-/wolf-like').[40] Within the Celtic family, ancient Gaulish provides cognates in the shape of the tribal names *Tri-corii*[41] and *Petru-corii*,[42] presumably referring to peoples founded by three or four such bands respectively, since successful expeditions by groups of this type were likely to lead to the settlement of new territory.

A PIE **kor-ɟo-s* 'sodality' (pertaining to PIE **kor-o-s* 'cutting, hacking, fighting' > Lith. *kãras* 'war'), which typically consisted of youthful hunter-warriors identified with wolves, etc., can be confidently reconstructed on the basis of the Celtic and other evidence. Precise cognates are found in a number of other Indo-European languages: notably, Lith. *kãrias* 'army', PGmc. **haryaz* (Goth. *harjis*, ON *herr*, OEng. *heri*, OHG *heri*, etc.) 'host, army', Epidaurian Gk. *Koiro-(makʰos)* '(fighting in a) sodality', the Latin town *Corio-li* (cf. the Gaulish names in *-corio-* above). The original bestial and berserk connotations of the Germanic term are clearly indicated by Oðinn's *ein-herjar* in Old-Norse literature and by

37 20, 1, 1; 26, 4, 5; 27, 8, 5. **38** M.A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (1962), p. 297.4–5. **39** Ibid., p. 25.17. **40** Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xvii; O'Brien, *Corpus*, p. 22.6–9. **41** Livy 21, 31, 9; Strabo 4, 1, 11. **42** Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 7, 75, 3; Strabo 4, 2, 2.

the *feralis exercitus* ('savage host') of *Harii* in Tacitus.[43] OPers. *kāra-* 'army' is probably < **kōro-s*, a so-called 'vr̥ddhi'-derivative of **koro-s*, likewise meaning 'belonging/pertaining to', and a PIE **korɟo-no-s* at the head of a **kor-ɟo-s* is implied by Homeric Gk. *koira-nos* '(war) leader', OBrit. *Coriono-*[44] and ON *herjann* (chiefly of Oðinn as leader of the aforementioned *ein-herjar*). Thus, *fían(n)* would seem to continue a specifically Irish neologism that tended increasingly to replace older *cuire*, from **koryos*, without much, if any, significant change in the nature of the institution so designated. By contrast, **koryos* (and hence, presumably, also what it basically signified) can be traced back with confidence, via Proto-Celtic, to Proto-Indo-European itself.

In early medieval Ireland, the vagrant *fían(n)*, made up primarily of propertiless, unmarried youths cut off from their kin, was clearly opposed to a settled kin-based *túath*, consisting chiefly of married adult householders under their *rí* or 'king'. Unlike *fían(n)*, the Old-Irish word *túath* continues a Proto-Celtic **toutā* (MW *tud*, Gaul. *touta-*, *toutio-*) and thence a PIE **teu̯teh₂* directly: e.g., Osc. *touto*, Umbr. *toto* (Italic); PGmc **þeudō* (Goth. *þiuda*, ON *þjóð*, OE *þēod*, OHG *diot(a)*); Lith. *tàuta* 'people', OPruss. *tauto* 'land' (Baltic); Illyr. *Teuta*, Thrac. *Tauto-medes*, Maced. *Teutamos*, Homeric Gk *Teuta-midēs* (on the Trojan side[45]) and Elean Gk *Teuti-aplos*. It has been argued in a number of studies that this basic social opposition geared to age-grading can be traced back to Proto-Indo-European times, where it was given straightforward lexical expression by the terms **korɟos* and **teu̯teh₂*, referring respectively to a vagabond sodality, mostly consisting of wild, wolfish youths, and to a settled community based upon adult householders.[46] Not only does this dichotomy appear to have survived in its essentials for several millennia down to the early medieval period in Ireland, but it also appears to have been designated by the direct reflexes of the Proto-Indo-European words involved, namely, OIr. *cuire* and *túath*, until the former was eventually superseded by *fían(n)* at a late prehistoric stage in Irish.

The wider Indo-European ramifications of these institutions and the vocabulary associated with them have been discussed at some length in the aforementioned contributions and will be given what aspires to be a more comprehensive treatment in an almost completed book.[47] The rest of this essay will be devoted primarily to a review of evidence relating to the ancient Celts.

43 *Germania* 43. **44** K.H. Jackson, *Language and history in early Britain* (1953), p. 307. **45** *Iliad* 2, 843. **46** K. McCone, 'Werewolves, cyclopes, *díberga* and *fianna*: juvenile delinquency in early Ireland', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 1–22; idem, 'Hund, Wolf und Krieger bei den Indogermanen' in W. Meid (ed.), *Studien zum indogermanischen Wortschatz* (1987), pp 101–54; idem, *Pagan past*, pp 203–32; idem, 'The cyclops in Celtic, Germanic and Indo-European myth', *Studia celtica*, 30 (1996), 89–111; idem, 'Wolfsbesessenheit, Nacktheit, Einäugigkeit und verwandte Aspekte des altkeltischen Männerbunds' in R.P. Das & G. Meiser (eds), *Geregeltes Ungestüm* (2002), pp 43–67. **47** K. McCone, *The Romulus syndrome* (forthcoming).

The Greek word Γαλάτης/Galatēs/'Gaul' is almost certainly based upon a native Gaulish word **galatis*. This is indirectly attested by Gregory of Tours (later sixth century AD) whose *Historia Francorum*[48] states that, in an attack on Gaul during the joint reign of Valerian and Galienus (AD 253–60), the leader of the Germanic Alemanni 'coming to the Arverni, burned, destroyed and overthrew that shrine which they call "Vasso(s) Galati(s)" in the Gaulish tongue (*quod Gallica lingua Vassogalate vocant*)'. The name's two components are to be compared with Gallo-Lat. *Dago-uassus* 'Good Lad'[49] as well as with Welsh *gwas* 'lad, young man, servant' and with the nearby place-name *Jaude* (twelfth-century Jalde and Gialde) < **Galatiā* 'place of the *Galatis*'.[50] The suffix **-ati-* is also seen, for example, in Gaul. Ναμαυσατις/Namausatis/'belonging to Nemausus', present-day Nîmes, or *Toutatis* 'belonging to the tribe/kingdom'.[51] **Galatis* must thus have meant something like 'possessed by **galā*', a Celtic word for fury with an inflamed martial aspect (< PIE **ǵʰl̥h₃-eh₂*)[52] underlying OIr. *gal* 'warlike ardour, fury, valour, steam' (also the verbal noun of OIr. *fichid*, *-fich* 'fights') and MW *gal* 'ferocity, hatred, enmity'. It is also seen in the Old-Irish expression *láth gaile* 'warrior', literally 'heat of fury', and seems to have been associated, above all, with the young, unmarried hunter-warriors of a sodality, as is indicated by Gregory's association of *galatis* with *uassos* 'young man' as well as by its frequent occurrence in early Irish compound names such as *Con-gal(ach)* 'having a hound's/wolf's fury/valour' and *Fían-gal(ach)* 'having a *fían*'s fury/valour'.[53] These mettlesome youths would seem to have been called **galatīs* in Gaulish as a result.

Bands of such warriors were liable to be sent away from home as a consequence of overpopulation or similar pressures in order to seek their fortune abroad. The first Gaulish immigration into northern Italy was ascribed to just such a phenomenon by Livy:

> We have received this account of the passage of the Gauls into Italy. In the reign of Tarquinius Priscus supreme rule over the Celts, who constitute the third part of Gaul, was in the hands of the Bituriges. They supplied the Celtic land with a king. This was Ambigatus, excelling in virtue and fortune both privately and publicly, insofar as Gaul was so productive in men and crops during his reign that the abundant multitude scarce seemed able to be governed. In old age he, wishing to relieve the kingdom of the burdensome multitude, revealed that he was going

48 1, 32. **49** D. Ellis Evans, *Gaulish personal names* (1967), pp 188–9. **50** K. McCone, 'Greek Κελτός and Γαλάτης, Latin *Gallus* "Gaul"', *Die Sprache*, 46 (2006), 94–111 at 96 and 102–3. **51** Ibid., 98. **52** Ibid.; idem, *The Celtic question* (2008), pp 4–6. **53** O'Brien, *Corpus*, pp 561–2 and 640.

> to send his sister's sons Bellovesus and Segovesus, both active young men (*impigri iuvenes*), into the abodes that the gods should grant in auguries. They were to take off as large a number of men as they wished so that no nation should be able to ward off their arrival. Then the Hercynian forests were given to Segovesus by lot and the gods gave to Bellovesus the scarcely less welcome route to Italy.[54]

Justin's epitome of Trogus Pompeius' lost Philippic Histories gives the following account:

> When the lands of their birth could no longer take them, the Gauls in their abundant multitude sent three hundred thousand men like a sacred spring (*ver sacrum*) to seek new abodes. A part of these settled in Italy and also took and burned Rome. And a part, led by birds (for the Gauls are skilled above others in the study of augury), penetrated the bays of Illyricum by defeating barbarians and settled in Pannonia.[55]

Livy explicitly calls the two brothers chosen as leaders *iuvenes* 'young men', the Latin reflex of an Indo-European word for 'young man' also found in OIr. *oaic* 'youths' and used as a designation of the members of a *fían* in (i) and (iii) above and elsewhere. He also refers to divine auguries as part of the process, which Trogus, via Justin, describes as a *ver sacrum* or 'sacred spring'. Citing as his source 'Alfius in the first book of the Carthaginian Wars' (probably first-century BC), Festus makes a *ver sacrum* responsible for the emigration of the Sabine Mamertines, which was similarly motivated by a pestilence at home:[55a]

> The Mamertini are so called because, when a serious pestilence had befallen all Samnium, the chief (*princeps*) of that nation, Sthennus Mettius, summoned an assembly of his citizens and explained that he had seen in repose Apollo instructing them to vow a sacred spring (*ut … ver sacrum voverent*) if they wished to be freed of that evil – i.e., they would offer up whatever should be born in the next year. Twenty years after they had been relieved by this action a pestilence of the same kind attacked them. Having been consulted again, Apollo replied that their vow had not been completed because men had not been offered up: if they expelled these, it would be certain that they would be freed of that disaster. These, then, having been ordered to leave the fatherland and having settled in that part of Italy which is now called Tauricana, voluntarily came to the aid of the Messenians, who happened to be struggling in a new war and freed those provincials from it. The latter, in order to repay this service invited them into their body (politic) and to a share of

54 5, 34, 1–4. **55a** P. 150 of Lindsay's edition. **55** 24, 4, 1–3.

> their lands. They also accepted a single name, being called Mamertini because, when the names of twelve gods had been cast together as lots, (the one that) happened to come out (was) Mamers, which means Mars in the language of the Oscans.

Those involved were evidently young men, all aged about twenty and placed under the tutelage of the war god. They were also unmarried, to judge from Polybius' account, written in the second century BC, of their outrageous behaviour in the Sicilian Greek city Messana, where they treacherously expelled or slew the male citizens and then took over their wives and children along with control of the city in 289 BC.[56]

Dionysius of Halicarnassus states that a similar custom was not only found in ancient Italy but also among the Greeks and other neighbouring peoples. He concludes with a statement implying its identity with the *ver sacrum*:

> At first it was a sacred band of youths (ἱερά τις νεότης) that set out, a few men sent forth by their parents in search of a livelihood in fulfilment of an ancient custom that I understand was practised by many barbarians and Greeks. For when nations sustained increase to a multitude so that their own resources were no longer sufficient for everybody or the earth, damaged by vicissitudes of weather, bore its usual fruits sparsely or some other better or worse fate befell the cities and necessitated a reduction in population, they used to dedicate the human offspring of a particular year to some god, equip them with arms and send them forth from their land … Those who had set out in the expectation of not getting a share of ancestral land, unless they acquired some other, used to take as their home the land that had either received them in friendship or been conquered. Moreover, the god to whom they had been dedicated on being driven out was supposed to assist them for the most part and bring the emigrations to a successful conclusion contrary to human expectation. Following this custom, then, some Aborigines, as their lands were abounding with men, devoted the offspring that had reached manhood that year to some god and sent the lads away from their home.[57]

Polybius has the Mamertines begin their notorious career in Sicily as mercenaries in the service of Agathocles, the Greek tyrant of Syracuse. Similar possibilities were clearly exploited by their Gaulish counterparts. Thus, Justin states that, a few months after the sack of Rome in 387/6 BC, Gauls operated in the South of Italy in the employ of Dionysius of Syracuse, who also sent more than twenty triremes carrying 'Celts and Iberians' to assist the Spartans in Greece in 369 BC.[58] He sent Celts again in 368 BC, according to Xenophon's contem-

56 1, 7, 2–4. **57** 1, 16, 1–2. **58** 24, 5, 4–6.

porary account.[59] Gauls, of course, began to migrate eastwards at about the same time as they moved southwards into Italy. Justin prefaces the invitation of Gauls to Asia Minor, by the king of Bythinia after their defeat in Macedon in 277 BC, with a reference to the ready availability of young Gaulish males and their widespread employment as mercenaries by the Hellenistic monarchs of Asia.[60] There is no shortage of evidence for the use of such hired Gaulish help in the western, as well as eastern, Mediterranean, as a glance at 'Celts' and 'Gauls' in the index of G.T. Griffith's book shows.[61] It is hardly surprising that mercenary activity should have provided an outlet for unattached, young Celtic soldiers, once they came into contact with states and rulers sufficiently wealthy to be able to afford their services. On the reasonable assumption that the warlike Gaulish emigrants who impinged upon the Mediterranean world as invaders or mercenaries typically called themselves **galatīs* 'furious ones', in effect 'berserks', it would be natural enough for the Greeks of Sicily and elsewhere to pick up a word designating the type of *Keltoi* that they usually encountered, adopt it into their own language as *Galatai* and then apply this term to the nation as a whole.

The first direct contact between Greeks and Gauls presumably came about as a result of the foundation of Massalia, modern Marseille, near the mouth of the River Rhone, by Phocaeans, around 600 BC. This is the date given in the early third century BC by the Sicilian Greek historian, Timaeus, who also indirectly supplies the first attestation of *Galates*.[62] Intrusion into the Po Valley, probably from the sixth century BC onwards, will have brought Gauls into direct contact with Etruscans, who may well have come to know them as **galatīs*, above all, for much the same reasons as the Greeks did later. **Galatis* would presumably have been adapted into Etruscan as **Kalate* and become **Kalde* by the early fifth century BC as a result of non-controversial Etruscan sound-changes.[63] Prior to first-hand contact with Gauls around the time of the sack of their city in 387/6 BC, the Romans seem most likely to have acquired a word for them from the Etruscans and *Gallus* is perfectly plausible as a classical Latin outcome of Etruscan **Kalde*.[64]

Viewed thus, the very names *Galatai* and *Galli*, in Greek and Latin respectively, were chiefly due to the formidable military role played in the ancient Mediterranean world, from the sixth to the third centuries BC, by wild and mostly young Gaulish warriors who were called *galatīs* 'furious ones' and typically belonged to **koryoi* of essentially the same type as the early medieval Irish *fiana*. Something similar might be inferred from the British name **Wēðelī* 'wild ones', apparently given in the late fourth or early fifth century BC to Irish raiders and then applied

59 *Hellenica*, 7, 1, 20–2 and 28–31. **60** 25, 2, 8–10. **61** *The mercenaries of the Hellenistic world* (1935). **62** McCone, 'Greek Κελτός and Γαλάτης, Latin *Gallus* "Gaul"', 95–6. **63** H. Rix, 'Etruscan' in R.D. Woodward (ed.), *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the world's ancient languages* (2004), pp 247–50. **64** McCone, 'Greek Κελτός and Γαλάτης, Latin *Gallus* "Gaul"', 103–7.

to the nation as a whole. Not unlike the Eastern Celts, who seem inceasingly to have used *Galatai* of themselves, the Irish then seem to have adopted the regular seventh-century outcome of this word, namely, **gwoiðıl*, as a self-designation.

The Sicilian Greek historian Diodorus gives the following description of what he calls 'a peculiar practice among the Iberians and especially the Lusitanians', an Indo-European people living in the west of the Iberian Peninsula in contact with various Celtic populations:

> For those in the prime of life with least wealth but outstanding physical strength and courage, having furnished themselves with prowess and arms, gather together in the mountainous wilds. Having formed bands of note, they overrun Iberia and amass wealth by plunder. This they do with complete contempt. Since they employ light arms and are utterly agile and swift, they are difficult for others to subdue. Regarding the wild and rough regions in the mountains as their absolute birthright, they take refuge in these areas, which are difficult for large and heavy armies to pass through.[65]

This behaviour is strikingly reminiscent of the way of life of the *fían* in general and, in particular, of the activity of the early Irish *díberg*, Macuil moccu Greccae, as described by Muirchú in (xiii) above. This brings us to another set of young, mountain-dwelling Celtic warriors. In their disastrous encounter with the Romans at Telamon in 225 BC, the Cisalpine Gauls were assisted by Γαισάται/ Gaisatai/, etymologically and no doubt actually 'spearsmen': Celt. **gaiso-* 'spear' (borrowed into Latin as *gaesum*, recorded as γαῖσος /gaisos/ by Hesychius and cognate with OIr. *gaí* 'spear' < **gaisos*) plus suffix **-ati-* 'pertaining to' (cf. **galatis* above). These were shield-bearing footsoldiers from the Alps according to Polybius, who gives a graphic account of how they fought naked in front of the Gaulish army in order to show off their courage, looking terrifying in the bloom of youth.[66] The Celts' Germanic neighbours also used naked, young warriors, armed with shield, spear and other missiles, as a front-line troop on the good evidence of Tacitus who also refers to the presentation of spear and shield as a rite of initiation[67] (just like the Irish *gabál gaiscid* in (x) and (xi) above) prior to joining a war-band consisting mostly of unmarried youths. These and the Gaulish Gaisatai bore the same type of weapons as Irish *fían*-warriors and bore a striking resemblance to Ulster's *óenchinnidi* as naked and frenzied crack-troops in (vii).

The 'naked and belted' Celtic warriors referred to by Diodorus,[68] in line with these sources, were also a stylistically distinct motif of classical iconography, especially after Attalus of Pergamum had celebrated his victories over the Galatians in Asia Minor around the middle of the third century BC with such magnificent sculptures as the 'Dying Gaul', a fine copy of which is conserved in Rome's Capitoline Museum (see figure 1.1). The bottom panel of a mid-

65 5, 3, 5. **66** 2, 28–30. **67** *Germania* 6 and 13–14. **68** 5, 29, 1–2.

fourth-century BC stele from Felsina, present-day Bologna, clearly juxtaposes a clothed and mounted Etruscan warrior with a naked Gaulish infantryman, armed only with shield and sword (see figure 1.2). A terracotta temple frieze of the second century BC, from Civitalba, depicts fleeing Gaulish soldiers, those in chariots wearing tunics but those on foot naked apart from neck-torques, belts and, in some cases, short cloaks. Two of the latter are shown in figure 1.3, while figure 1.4 shows a striking native example from Hirschlanden in south-western Germany, namely, a large sixth-century BC stone statue of an ithyphallic Gaulish chieftain, naked apart from a helmet, a neck-torque and a belt holding his sword.

Still more valuable iconographic evidence is provided by three inner panels of the Gundestrup Cauldron which date from about the first century BC. Although found in Denmark, this magnificent silver artefact (on display in the National Museum, Copenhagen) was almost certainly imported from elsewhere, most likely Thrace with its significant admixture of Gaulish populations from the third century BC onwards. The first panel of interest is the well-known 'Cernunos' panel, the main human-figure of which has definite Gaulish parallels discussed by Jan de Vries.[69] He has horns on his head and the hatching of his vest, knee-britches and cap suggests fur or hair. A deer flanks him on the left and a wolf on the right. Since his horns obviously associate him with the former, the fur of his garments may well belong to the latter. The implication is that he partakes of the attributes of both animals, which we have seen juxtaposed in connection with young warriors of the *fian* roaming the mountains in (i) above. Quite likely, then, we have here the patron god of the **koryos*, prone to frequent the wilds. Above the deer and wolf on the Gundestrup Cauldron are a goat and a lion respectively, which can be regarded as their functional equivalents in a near-eastern or Balkan context. The second panel depicts three hunters, each accompanied by a hound or perhaps a wolf, attacking three huge oxen, above each of which stands a spotted wild animal that may plausibly be identified as a leopard. The quarry is doubtless the aurochs referred to by Caesar[70] as a denizen of ancient Europe's great Hercynian forest, while the leopards may well be a basically Balkan feature. In the probable event that the animals at the bottom are hounds, they are presumably assisting in the hunt. If they are wolves, their function would presumably be as mascots of the men, whose hairy garments resemble those of 'Cernunos' on the first plate and may represent wolf-skin. The two outer figures are half-naked, wearing only a cap and knee-britches, but the central figure's garment also covers his upper body. This panel, then, very probably depicts youthful members of a **koryos* hunting in a forest symbolized by stylized leaves also seen on its 'Cernunos' counterpart. There can be little doubt about the essential correctness of de Vries' interpretation of the third panel (figure 1.5):

69 J. de Vries, *Keltische Religion* (1961), pp 104–7. **70** *De Bello Gallico* 6, 28.

> A group of footsoldiers moves towards this cauldron, whereas above them we see a group of warriors on horseback who are moving away from the cauldron … : men march to the vessel, are immersed therein – the single man depicted presumably represents every warrior in the line – and then move away as mounted warriors … I regard it as really rash to see resurrection from death here … One might rather think of an initiation, bearing in mind that in many places this is represented as a symbolic death, a transition separating two phases of life from one another. In that case the men on horseback could designate the new members of the tribe emerging as young mounted warriors. The figure who immerses them one after the other in the vessel would then be the officiating priest.[71]

Nevertheless, the bottom line of six footsoldiers deserves further attention. These are armed with spear and shield and are dressed like 'Cernunos' and the hunters on the two previous panels. Most importantly of all, an unmistakable wolf faces the line as a whole, presumably as its mascot. Here, then, we surely have the young 'wolves' of a **koryos* or society of hunter-warriors about to make the transition to fighters on horseback by means of a baptismal rite widely employed, not least by Christians, to symbolize the end of one phase of life as death by drowning and the transition to another as a suitably cleansed rebirth. The figure standing immediately behind the six footsoldiers has the same hairy vest and britches as they do but is bearing a short staff or sword, rather than a spear and shield, and is wearing a helmet of the same type as the horsemen at the top. Clearly, then, he has affinities with both groups, presumably as a senior figure charged with training up the young footsoldiers to this rite of passage destined to remove them from his supervision. The three figures behind him are dressed just like the footsoldiers except that they are blowing long animal-headed horns instead of bearing spear and shield. Apparently, they too are 'wolves' but are not yet due for initiation and serve as assistants at their comrades' departure for a new way of life as knights.

Whatever about some of the details, the crucial point here is that the three scenes from the Gundestrup Cauldron, just discussed, present clear evidence for a sequentially regulated Gallo-Thracian opposition between, on the one hand, a society of typically wolfish young fighters, operating on foot and armed with spear and shield, and, on the other, a class of mounted warriors, progress from the former to the latter set being marked by a baptismal rite of passage. Since Caesar[72] draws a sharp social distinction between the aristocratic *equites* or 'knights' and the common people or *plebs* among the Gauls of his day (and the ownership of horses anyway presupposes a degree of prosperity), it seems reasonable to infer that, in the society to which these scenes on the cauldron refer, as in early medieval Ireland, admission to a society of hunter-warrior 'wolves' in the wilds was confined as a rule to sons of the nobility.

71 de Vries, *Keltische Religion*, pp 47–8. **72** *De Bello Gallico* 6, 13–14.

This brief treatment will be concluded by quoting from a summary of the chief characteristics of the Indo-European **kor(i̯)os*:

> It seems clear that young males past the age of puberty … would normally form or enter such a group under one or more leaders … and stay in it for a period of time varying, according to circumstances, from a few years to the whole of their life. During this time they remained unmarried and were cut off from the settled community as … (i) 'non-persons' ritually dead to their kin at home, (ii) killers of men and beasts and (iii) probably devotees of a god of war or death. Consigned as they were to a vagabond life hunting and fighting in, as well as launching raids from, the wilds, they were equated with wild beasts, particularly wolves … as Eurasia's most formidable pack predators. This bestial identity was typically expressed either by dispensing with human clothing altogether and going about naked or by donning animal hides, particularly wolfskins … The predominantly youthful members of a **kor(i̯)os* travelled on foot as a rule, swiftness and agility being vital attributes. Their characteristic behaviour was wild and licentious … They were prone to rabid bouts of strength enhancing fury in combat, a condition associated chiefly with the root **ǵʰelh₃* 'be(come) furious/strong/fiery' … Warfare was an essential part of these sodalities' *raison d'être*, particular distinction attaching to certain serious but often non-fatal wounds liable to be sustained in battle, notably loss of a foot or leg, of a hand or arm and, above all, of an eye. These deficiencies, particularly blindness in one eye or cyclopism, were accorded magical, ritual and mythical significance as martial emblems. The body parts liable to be severed also included the head … and it seems that slain enemies were routinely decapitated, their heads … then being kept as tokens of their slayers' prowess. Hunting and raiding were the basic *modus vivendi* of these nomadic warrior bands, whose size seems to have ranged from small (a dozen or less) through medium (one or more hundreds) to large (thousands). The evidence suggests that they were prone to combine and divide more or less at will, this flexibility having obvious logistical advantages in relation to the availability of food and plunder or to the purpose in hand. Small scattered groups would presumably be best for hunting and foraging when resources were scarce … Subject to provisioning constraints, size would clearly be an advantage or even a necessity for more ambitious undertakings such as pitched battles, major raids or planned emigrations in search of new territory.[73]

The relevance of much of this to the early Irish *fían* as the continuation of a Celtic **koryos* should be obvious.

73 McCone, *The Romulus syndrome*.

Interpreting the evidence: problems with dating the early *fianaigecht* corpus

Kevin Murray

A century ago, Kuno Meyer listed fifty-nine different texts containing *fianaigecht* elements which he tentatively placed in chronological order from the seventh to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[1] In so ordering these compositions:

1. one text, *Reicne Fothaid Chanainne* (§IV), is edited and subsequently analysed in depth on grounds of language and rhyme;[2]
2. very brief linguistic arguments are advanced in a further three cases (§III, §V and §VI);
3. one other narrative (§II) is said to be written in 'pure Old Irish'.

Meyer also printed a number of sources as part of his study; in assigning dates to four of these (§VII, §VIII, §XXXII and §XLVII), no additional linguistic analysis is offered. Ten poems have authorial ascriptions and are dated by Meyer accordingly:

§I: beg. 'Find Taulcha' (Senchán Torpéist, seventh century);
§IX: beg. 'Áth Lïac Find, cid diatá', on the *dinnshenchas* of Áth Líac Finn (Máel Muru Othna, †887);
§X: beg. 'Innid scél scaílter n-airich', on the deaths of famous heroes (Flannacán mac Cellaig, †896);
§XIII: two poems beg. 'Fíana bátar i nEmain' and 'Án-sin a maig Mic ind Óc' (Cináed úa hArtacáin, †975);
§XXII: beg. 'A Mór Maigne Moigi Siúil' (Irard mac Coisse, †990);[3]
§XXVIII: metrical *dinnshenchas* of Carn Furbaide (Cuán úa Lothcháin, †1024);
§XXXV: beg. 'Annálad anall uile' (Gilla Cóemáin, *fl.* 1072);

1 *Fianaigecht* (1910), pp xvi–xxxi. In this essay, the section sign (§) followed by uppercase Roman numerals refers to the relevant entry in Meyer's list; the texts in question are identified in Appendix 1, though the titles used here sometimes vary in orthography from those given by Meyer. **2** Ibid., pp 1–3. **3** This ascription, which Meyer makes on the basis of 'language, style, and treatment of a similar subject' (*Fianaigecht*, p. xxiv), is not accepted by G. Murphy (*Early Irish lyrics* (1956), p. 88), though it is tentatively endorsed by J. Carney ('Notes on early Irish verse', *Éigse*, 13 (1969–70), 291–312 at 304–12).

§XLV: beg. 'A rí richid, réidig dam' (Gilla in Choimded úa Cormaic, *fl.* eleventh/twelfth century?);
§XLVI: sections of the metrical *Banshenchas* (Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside, *fl.* 1147).[4]

A further four narratives (§§XXIII–XXVI) are dated to the tenth century because their titles appear in the medieval Irish tale-lists; however, one of these tales is lost (§XXVI *Úath Dercce Ferna/Echtra Fhinn i nDerc Fherna*) and there is some doubt about equating two others titles with extant texts (§XXIV *Aithed Gráinne la Diarmaid* and §XXV *Úath Beinne Étair*).[5]

A significant fact mentioned by Meyer with regard to the dating of two texts (§X and §XII[6]) is the naming of Finn without his patronymic, which he seems to take as a development of the late ninth/early tenth century, the name Finn alone sufficing 'to indicate the famous warrior'.[7] Four poems (§§XIV–XVII) are apparently dated to the tenth century because they form part of the metrical *Dinnshenchas*, although four other compositions belonging to the same tradition, preserved in the Book of Leinster (§XLI, §XLII and §XLIX) and in *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*) (§LIV), are placed in the twelfth. Similarly, four stories belonging to the prose *Dinnshenchas* (cited as one reference) are dated to the twelfth century (§XXXIX).

A number of texts are dated with reference to other materials, many of which are from the *fianaigecht* corpus:

1. one poem (§XX) is placed in the tenth century and is said to predate *Macgnímrada Finn* (§XLIII), which Meyer dates to the twelfth;
2. the reference to Finn as a famous poet in 'Mittelirische Verslehren' (§XXIX) is placed in the late tenth or eleventh century, as the treatise contains a poem in praise of Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill (†1022);
3. *Fotha catha Cnucha* (§XXX) is dated to the eleventh century because it draws on one of the poems on the *dinnshenchas* of Almu (§XIV), which Meyer places in the tenth.

Nine compositions (§XXXVIII, §§XL–XLII, §§XLIX–LII and §LVII) seem to be dated to the twelfth century solely because of their attestation in the Book

4 Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxix, incorrectly gives 1143 as the date of Gilla Mo Dutu's death. For the correct date see M. Ní Bhrolcháin, 'The manuscript tradition of the *Banshenchas*', *Ériu*, 33 (1982) 109–35 at 109; K. Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside' in J. Carey et al. (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile* (2004), pp 150–62 at p. 151, n. 8. **5** P. Mac Cana, *The learned tales of medieval Ireland* (1980), pp 86–7 and 97. **6** §XII is a reference to Finn and the boar of Druim Leithe which is found in K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *The triads of Ireland* (1906), §236. The compilation of the *Triads* is generally dated to the ninth century: F. Kelly, 'Thinking in threes: the triad in early Irish literature', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 125 (2004), 1–18 at 3. **7** *Fianaigecht*, p. xxi.

of Leinster. This manuscript assuredly gives us a *terminus ad quem* for these texts but, without the confirmation of supplementary evidence, in no way can it be seen as supplying a *terminus a quo* for them.[8] *AS* (§LVIII) is put in the 'Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries' category, although the only dating criteria noted are the mention of Mellifont in the text (which would place it after the foundation of that monastery in 1142) and the analysis of the prose introduction to the *dinnshenchas* of Tonn Chlidna (§LIV), which Meyer dates to the twelfth century and which he believes contains the 'oldest mention' of *AS*. 'The chase of Síd na mBan Finn' (§LIX), which Meyer dates to the early modern period, lies outside the parameters of the present investigation.

Meyer does not rehearse the basis for the dating of a significant amount of material edited elsewhere (by himself and others). Some of these texts were tentatively dated by their editors, but many were not (§XI, §XVIII, §XIX, §XXI, §XXVII, §XXX, §XXXI, §XXXIII, §XXXIV, §XXXVI, §XXXVII, §XLIII, §XLIV, §XLVIII, §LIII, §LV and §LVI). Though he does not spell out the criteria utilized in dating these materials, the bulk of which would presumably have been linguistic, Meyer's work not only carried the weight of his reputation behind it but also benefited from the consistency inherent in it being the work of a single scholar.[9]

The first person to grapple in a meaningful way with the dates proposed by Meyer was Gerard Murphy in the Introduction to volume iii of *Duanaire Finn*. In a section titled '§8 Comparison of that folk residuum with the oldest Fionn literature', Murphy re-examined and redated many of the compositions which had been scrutinized by Meyer.[10] Furthermore, the poems dated by Meyer that are also to be found in *Duanaire Finn* were re-examined in detail by Murphy in the body of the book. Though some of these texts have since been dated individually, only one other scholar has listed and re-examined the entire early *fianaigecht* corpus to my certain knowledge: Joseph Flahive in his Edinburgh doctoral thesis.[11]

8 For example, with regard to §LVII (the poem beginning 'Ligi Guill i mMaig Raigni'), its most recent editor favours a mid-eleventh-century date of composition (prior to 1072): D. Ó Murchadha (ed. and trans.), *Lige Guill* (2009), pp xxviii–xxxii. **9** See the comments with regard to Thurneysen's dating of texts in his *Heldensage* which have been made by G. Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), 109–37 at 117: 'Many dates were supplied by Thurneysen in his monumental work, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, based mainly, I suspect, on intuition and often not specifying accurately the evidence on which the dating was founded. Some of these dating attempts give rise to misgivings on account of the weakness of the arguments offered, though one realizes that, in spite of the poor argument, such dates had Thurneysen's authority behind them'. Mac Eoin's essay is the published version of the Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture, delivered on 28 October 1981. **10** E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp liv–lxx. **11** 'The relic lays: a study in the development of late Middle Gaelic *fianaigheacht*' (2004), pp 22–41. Cf. also the extensive discussion of the early traditions in D. Ó hÓgáin,

As a means of approaching the dating issues associated with the early Finn-Cycle compositions, I wish to examine them through the prism of an important paper presented nearly thirty years ago. Therein, Gearóid Mac Eoin discussed, in some detail, the problems associated with dating texts from the Middle-Irish period.[12] The specific issues he identified are:

1. the fragmentary state of the evidence;
2. the time-lapse between the original composition of the text and the writing of the surviving copies;
3. the anonymity of much of the material;
4. the archaizing tendencies of certain authors and scribes;
5. the influence of the spoken dialects on the written language;
6. the manner in which many texts developed.

Because these issues are pertinent to the dating of the broader corpus of medieval Irish literature, Mac Eoin's approach is very useful in outlining the difficulties inherent in any attempt to establish a chronology of early *fianaigecht* texts and so will be followed here.

1. The fragmentary state of the evidence

Mac Eoin pointed out that lack of certain crucial evidence makes it hard to answer all grammatical questions regarding Middle Irish.[13] For example, he cites the lack of securely dated texts for the bulk of the tenth century, a problem that is still apparent from the more recent studies of Middle Irish. While this remains a problem with dating texts from this period, *fianaigecht* and otherwise, the question of partial evidence casts a different shadow across early Finn-Cycle material.

The fragmentary nature of the extant written corpus may serve to conceal the actual extent of cultivation of *fianaigecht* in medieval Ireland. Murphy noted that:

> the evidence of … early references to Fionn goes to show that in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries, when tales of the Mythological, Heroic, and King cycles were flourishing, Fionn, though well known to men of learning, was confined in their learned lore to short anecdotes connecting him with fighting, hunting, wooing, and otherworld incidents all over Ireland.[14]

Though the early extant written literature is undoubtedly not very extensive when compared with other literary genres of the time, this does not mean that

Fionn mac Cumhaill (1988). **12** 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 113–15. **13** Ibid., 113. **14** *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales of medieval Ireland* (1971), p. 11.

the *fianaigecht* tradition was not a vibrant one in the early medieval period. I can only concur with Proinsias Mac Cana who argued that what survives represents only a small portion 'of what must have been a vital and prolific literature about Fionn and his *fian*'.[15]

One easy way of demonstrating this is by comparing the thematic concerns and the storylines of Old-Irish *fianaigecht* tales with later Finn-Cycle texts. The theme of age versus youth, which is central to 'The quarrel between Finn and Oisín',[16] is found again in later tales; for example, it is evident in *Tochmarc Ailbe*,[17] where Ailbe, the youngest daughter of Cormac mac Airt, explicitly prefers Finn to younger warriors because of what his greater age and experience can offer. Finn's acquisition of mantic abilities remains a repeated concern throughout the literature, while Finn's killing of an Otherworld rival with a spear at the *síd* entrance, attested in *Marbad Cúil Duib*,[18] is a recurrent theme present, for example, in *Macgnímrada Finn* and in *AS*.[19] Finally, the emphasis in 'Finn and Lomnae'[20] on severed heads finds multiple echoes in other *fianaigecht* texts.[21]

The specific reworking and re-using of a number of such themes in *AS* shows us the extent to which the later author was drawing on a broader tradition. However, explicit parallels may be drawn only with what has survived in the earlier literature; the extent to which an underlying oral tradition may have influenced the composition of the text must remain largely unquantifiable. I follow both Joseph Nagy and Seán Ó Coileáin in seeing *AS* not as 'a transcription of orally composed prose or verse'[22] but as 'an untraditional text fashioned in traditional prosimetrum form out of what we generally assume to have been more-or-less traditional sources, and in no wise can it, or any part of it, be regarded as raw oral literature'.[23]

2. The time-lapse between the original composition of the text and the writing of the surviving copies

Studies of early *fianaigecht* texts are particularly bedeviled by this problem. With the exception of the Book of Leinster, which contains a goodly amount of Finn-

15 '*Fianaigecht* in the pre-Norman period' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 75–99 at p. 83. **16** Printed in Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, pp 22–7. **17** R. Thurneysen (ed. and trans.), '*Tochmarc Ailbe*: "Das Verbum um Ailbe"', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 13 (1921), 250–82. **18** V. Hull (ed. and trans.), 'Two tales about Find', *Speculum*, 16 (1941), 322–33 at 329–33. **19** Discussed by J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985), pp 187–8. **20** Printed in Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, pp xix–xx. **21** See J. Carey, *Ireland and the grail* (2007), pp 256–8. Severed heads play an important role in, for example, *Bruiden Átha Í* (Hull, 'Two tales about Find', 323–9), *Reicne Fothaid Chanainne* (Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, pp 1–21) and 'The death of Finn mac Cumaill' (K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'The death of Finn mac Cumaill', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 462–5). **22** J.F. Nagy, 'Oral tradition in the *Acallam na senórach*' in W.F.H. Nicolaisen (ed.), *Oral tradition in the Middle Ages* (1995), pp 77–95 at p. 84. **23** S. Ó Coileáin, 'Place and placename in *fianaigheacht*', *Studia Hibernica*, 27 (1993), 45–60 at

related material (particularly poetry, much of it *dinnshenchas*), the two other great pre-1200 Irish-language codices have only a minimum from this corpus. For example, *Lebor na hUidre* contains only two Finn-Cycle texts: *Fotha catha Cnucha* and *Scél asa mberar combad hé Finn mac Cumaill Mongán* (the first of these the work of interpolator H). Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 502, meanwhile, only has scattered references to the *féinnidi* of Finn in poems such as that beginning 'Eól dam i ndairib dréchta',[24] along with verses put into the mouth of Finn such as the famous 'Tánic sam'.[25] Even with these earlier manuscripts, the issue of time-lapse arises; for example, the composition of the Mongán tale, mentioned above, predates the writing of *Lebor na hUidre* by several hundred years.[26]

As Mac Eoin pointed out, this time-lapse brings up the issue of 'textual fidelity' concerning the reliability of an early composition that survives in later sources only.[27] A good case in point is 'Finn and the man in the tree', a text which may date to the first half of the eighth century, the sole copy of which is preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript, Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1337 (H.3.18). The centuries between its first writing-down and its copying into the Trinity College manuscript have provided ample scope for textual addition and subtraction, for changing and updating of linguistic forms, and for mistakes to enter into the narrative in the course of transmission. However, manuscript and/or linguistic earliness is in itself no guarantee of fidelity to a tradition (as opposed to fidelity to an earlier text). As Ó Coileáin argued with regard to the cycle of stories about Gúaire Aidne, 'the reliability of the material is not necessarily dependent on the date of the language, and the general assumption that it is is an unfortunate legacy of a tradition of scholarship built on a linguistic foundation'.[28] Concerning fidelity to an earlier or 'original' text, many scholars have discovered that the earliest manuscript copies are not necessarily the best ones: this has been repeatedly remarked upon, for example, with regard to texts preserved in the Book of Leinster.[29]

3. The anonymity of much of the material

Like the bulk of Old- and Middle-Irish material across all genres, the majority of Finn-Cycle literature is anonymous. We have a number of poems which are

54. **24** K. Meyer (ed.), 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: *Do chomramaib Laigen inso sis* (aus Rawlinson B 502, S. 88a)', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 8 (1912), 117–19. **25** J. Carney, 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', *Ériu*, 22 (1971), 23–80 at 43–52. **26** N. White (ed. and trans.), *Compert Mongáin and three other early Mongán tales* (2006), pp 25–35 at p. 25, dates *Scél asa mberar* to the Old-Irish period, believing that 'an eighth-century date of composition is well within the bounds of possibility'. **27** 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', p. 113. **28** 'The structure of a literary cycle', *Ériu*, 25 (1974), 88–125 at 89. **29** K. Meyer, review of E.J. Gwynn, *The metrical Dindshenchas*, ii (1906) in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 6 (1908), 245–8 at 245–6; Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 113; K. Murray, 'The finding of the *Táin*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 41 (2001), 17–23 at 19, n. 14.

attributed to different historical poets and many of these attributions have been accepted; this has greatly facilitated their analysis with linguistic arguments generally being advanced as supplementary dating evidence.[30] However, poems with no tangible *fianaigecht* element are regularly ascribed to Finn and Oisín: these ascriptions do not constitute sufficient grounds for including them in the Finn Cycle.[31]

4. The archaizing tendencies of certain authors and scribes

This is an issue which affects only a small number of texts within the early *fianaigecht* corpus. Generally, the dominant influence goes in the other direction, namely, texts written in an earlier period are updated by later redactors, often with this reworking obscuring the date of the earlier composition. Perhaps the most important re-examination of this issue has been undertaken by John Carey with regard to the dating of some of the poetry preserved in *Duanaire Finn*.[32] For example, his analysis of the poem known as 'The headless phantoms', which is also preserved in the Book of Leinster, shows how the version in the *Duanaire* has been updated, and how this serves to camouflage its earlier date of composition. Indeed, Carey argued that, if the Book of Leinster copy had not survived, 'The headless phantoms' could not 'persuasively be dated earlier than the thirteenth century, and even a later date would be difficult to rule out'.[33]

With regard to this *fianaigecht* collection as a whole, Carey concluded that 'several of the poems may well date from the eleventh century, and some may conceivably be as old as the later tenth' – which, as he noted, would make them contemporary with the earliest Gaelic narrative poetry.[34] As Geraldine Parsons pertinently argued, when we take this into account, 'the dividing line between the earlier prose-dominated corpus and the later one, which is traditionally seen to be initiated by the earliest *Duanaire* items, needs to be reassessed'.[35] I would

30 Of course, linguistic arguments have a central role in determining if the attributions are likely to be true or false. However, even when an authorial ascription is accepted, sometimes the linguistic evidence, though not contradicting the attribution, may be of no use in actively supporting it. See, for example, P.J. Smith (ed. and trans.), *Three historical poems ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin* (2007), pp 92–101 at p. 101: 'The linguistic evidence of the surviving texts of his [Gilla Cóemáin's] poems is of little value in supporting this date [1072] and does not point to any precise period'. **31** For example, a poem such as that beginning 'Scél lem dúib' (Murphy, *Early Irish lyrics*, pp 160–1, §53), apart from the ascription to Finn, has no obvious connection to *fianaigecht* (unless one considers nature poetry to be exclusively part of *fianaigecht* which is patently untrue). **32** 'Remarks on dating' in J. Carey (ed.), *Duanaire Finn: reassessments* (2003), pp 1–18. **33** Ibid., p. 17. Furthermore, we do not know whether the Book of Leinster copy is very close to the original or is at some remove from it, as the ability of scribes to update the language of their source material, in the process obscuring the date of composition, does not apply only to later redactors of the tradition. **34** Ibid., p. 18. **35** Review of J. Carey (ed.), *Duanaire Finn: reassessments* (2003) in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*,

add a further caveat to this: when we factor this proposed redating into any detailed examination of the *fianaigecht* corpus predating *AS*, we realize that lays might well constitute the largest element of early Finn-Cycle material in existence.[36]

To revert to the original issue: I think that the archaizing tendencies of certain authors and scribes may be glimpsed occasionally in their use of *roscada*. It has been shown that 'composing in the *rosc* style continued as least as far as the second quarter of the eighth century';[37] thus, material of this kind in early sources such as 'Finn and the man in the tree' and *Marbad Cúil Duib* is probably original to these narratives, both in style and content. However, what are we to make of the presence of *roscada* in later texts such as 'Finn and Gráinne' and *Tochmarc Ailbe*?[38] Their usage in these compositions would seem to reflect the stylistic concerns of the authors, with the *roscad*-style material used primarily in direct speech. However, the ability of these composers to imitate, quite successfully, a type of composition which was more prevalent at a much earlier date might be seen also as an attempt to give a more archaic feel to these texts, with the utilization of obscure syntax and/or vocabulary a central part of the desired effect.[39] Ultimately, however, it is important to note that the *roscada* in 'Finn and Gráinne' and *Tochmarc Ailbe* are thought to date to the same time-period as the texts in which they are embedded.[40]

5. The influence of the spoken dialects on the written language

Mac Eoin referred to this important, but ultimately unquantifiable, issue as an 'imponderable'.[41] It may be more relevant to the analysis of *AS* than to that of other Finn-Cycle texts. Though *AS* contains many incidents which are attested earlier in the extant literature, and though it seems clear that there were other

55 (2008), 70–2 at 72. **36** Furthermore, the earliest manuscript copies of certain lays have not yet been utilized in their editing. For example, J. Flahive, 'An fhianaigheacht' in *History of Irish manuscript literature* (forthcoming), has pointed out that the final section of the Book of Uí Maine contains two lays along with 'an extended and reworked version of the *dinnsheanchas* of Cnucha with a Fenian apologue at the end'. Editions of the poems published to date make no reference to these oldest manuscript copies from the Book of Uí Maine. **37** L. Breatnach, 'Canon law and secular law in early Ireland', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 439–59 at 458. **38** J. Corthals (ed. and trans.), 'Die Trennung von Finn und Gráinne', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 49/50 (1997), 71–91; idem (ed. and trans.), 'Ailbe's speech to Cithruad (*Tochmarc Ailbe*)', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 1–9. **39** On this topic see J. Carey, 'Obscure styles in medieval Ireland', *Mediaevalia*, 19 (1996), 23–39. Cf. the comments on *roscada* of P. Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum in insular Celtic literature' in J. Harris & K. Reichl (eds), *Prosimetrum* (1997), pp 99–130 at p. 108: 'Whatever their precise role may have been in pre-literate tradition, they are used not infrequently in Old and Middle Irish tales to invest their narratives with a certain air of antiquity and primal authority'. **40** Corthals, 'Die Trennung', 73–4; idem, 'Ailbe's Speech'. **41** 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 114.

early written sources underpinning its composition which have not survived, some of its constituent material nevertheless would seem to have emerged from a strong oral tradition. This is echoed in the text itself which 'supposedly contains a series of oral performances rendered into a literary form'.[42] A substantial literary performance, which probably drew in a significant way on an extant oral tradition, might exhibit influence of the spoken dialects on the written language more than would textual traditions, such as biblical exegesis and grammar, which were likely to have been primarily written throughout. The fact that dialectal elements may be very difficult to recognize and quantify, and thus of limited use from a dating point of view, does not mean that their putative existence should be ignored.[43]

6. The manner in which many texts developed

As Mac Eoin argued, the repeated copying, reworking, addition and subtraction of material over a period of centuries has 'resulted in the phenomenon of language stratification' in many extant medieval Irish texts.[44] Surprisingly, this feature is not as prevalent as one might expect in the pre-1200 *fianaigecht* corpus. Thus, compositions such as *Macgnímrada Finn* and *Tesmolta Cormaic 7 aided Finn*, both of which are undoubtedly composite in nature, have either camouflaged their language stratification quite well or, more probably, their distinctive elements date to similar time-periods. The thematic and stylistic joins are obvious in these narratives, in the case of *Tesmolta Cormaic 7 aided Finn* being signalled in the title of the work itself; the linguistic joins are far less obvious.

Sometimes, the layout in Meyer's *Fianaigecht* serves to conceal the intricacies of the situation. This is certainly the case with regard to §IX, the *dinnshenchas* poem on Áth Líac Finn attributed to Máel Muru Othna (†887). The brief analysis of this poem, and its dating to the Old-Irish period, focuses solely on the composition beginning 'Áth Lïac Find, cid diatá'.[45] It does not take into account the later reworked version of the poem beginning 'Áth Líac Find, cía lía diatá',[46] which exhibits this characteristic language stratification. Although the latter contains much of the original poem, it omits many of the verses, adds

42 Nagy, 'Oral tradition', p. 84. Of course, this presentation should not distract us from the thoroughly literary and artistic construct that comprises the extant manuscript texts of *AS*. **43** On the issue of dialect in medieval Irish, and on the question of vocabulary as a dialect-marker see P. Kelly, 'Dialekte im Altirischen?' in W. Meid et al. (eds), *Sprachwissenschaft in Innsbruck* (1982), pp 85–9; A. Ahlqvist, 'Remarks on the question of dialects in Old Irish' in J. Fisiak (ed.), *Historical dialectology* (1988), pp 23–38; K. Murray, 'Dialect in medieval Irish? Evidence from placenames', *Studia celtica Fennica*, 2 (2005), 97–109; P. Russell, '"What was best of every language": the early history of the Irish language' in D. Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, i (2005), pp 405–50 at pp 439–50. **44** 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 114. **45** E.J. Gwynn (ed. and trans.), *The metrical Dindshenchas*, 5 vols (1903–35), iv, pp 36–9. **46** Ibid., pp 40–3.

a few new stanzas and, ultimately, reworks the entire composition. To complicate matters further, these poems also need to be investigated in light of the related prose preserved in the Rennes *Dinnshenchas*.[47]

Such inter-relationships do point the way forward in certain situations. The affiliation of the surviving pieces of the Áth Líac Finn tradition, alongside a possible oral and unrecoverable stratum, means that we can hope to establish a relative chronology of these extant written texts, with Máel Muru Othna's composition as the linguistic anchor. Similarly, the tradition present in the opening section of *Bruiden Átha Í*, namely, the *dinnshenchas* of Cenn Cuirrig, is re-used and reworked in the Rennes *Dinnshenchas*[48] and in the Metrical *Dinnshenchas*.[49] Once more, taking *Bruiden Átha Í* as our starting point, and allowing for a tradition most probably preserved both orally and in writing, it should be possible to construct a relative chronology of the extant written narratives concerning the *dinnshenchas* of Cenn Cuirrig: such an examination should serve to give us some idea of the unfolding linguistic and thematic development of this tradition.

* * *

To these six issues raised by Mac Eoin, I wish to add a number of further points of relevance to this particular study.

7. The lack of context

One of the features hampering the dating of many texts from medieval Ireland is their complete lack of context, both from a manuscript and a societal point of view. Hence, investigators are without an anchor in approaching such compositions from an extra-linguistic point of view.[50] This may be more germane for early *fianaigecht* materials, which – it has been argued – 'were not of societal relevance'.[51] On the occasions when context is available, the difference it can make to our understanding of texts and their dating is immeasurable. For

47 W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue celtique*, 16 (1895), 135–67 at 147–8, §139. **48** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue celtique*, 15 (1894), 418–84 at 442–4, §49. **49** Gwynn, *The metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, pp 234–5. **50** The three most common methods of dating texts from a non-linguistic perspective are given by Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 124–7, as: (1) ascription to a known author; (2) reference to the text in other dated sources; (3) reference in the text to dated events. These methods are not without their problems, however. For example, with regard to (1), though Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside is traditionally named as the author of 'Éri óg inis na náem', Máire Ní Mhaonaigh has suggested that he may have been reworking an earlier poem and that he was subsequently credited with the entire composition: 'Bréifne bias in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*', *Ériu*, 43 (1992), 135–58 at 156. **51** R. Baumgarten, 'Placenames, etymology and the structure of *fianaigecht*' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht*, pp 1–24 at p. 16.

example, as already mentioned, 'Finn and the man in the tree' is generally dated on linguistic grounds to the eighth century and this is given support by its manuscript context. The sole copy of the text is found as part of the Introduction to the *Senchas már*.[52] This compilation was 'probably brought together before the middle of the 8th century' and the Introduction most likely dates to the same time-period.[53] Thus, the context of the text's survival points to the first half of the eighth century: this lends considerable support to the linguistic dating advanced.

Similarly, 'Finn and Gráinne' has proven quite difficult to date linguistically, with published opinions ranging from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. The most recent editor of the text, however, while acknowledging the linguistic difficulties involved, has pointed to the treatment of one of the central themes of the story, the amicable separation of the main protagonists.[54] In the later written tradition, in texts such as *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*[55] and *Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla*,[56] the separation of the two main characters is presented as being acrimonious. It is possible that this difference of presentation reflects different societal attitudes, with 'Finn and Gráinne' dating from before the church reform movement became firmly established in the twelfth century. The reform movement put great emphasis on the sanctity of marriage and this is reflected in *fianaigecht* literature in the importance which is placed on this theme in *AS*.[57]

8. 'Early' versus 'late' linguistic forms

When a text displays a combination of earlier and later linguistic forms, as so many medieval Irish texts do, different approaches to the evidence are possible. One point of view would see the earliest surviving linguistic forms as indicative of the date of original composition of the core narrative. This viewpoint can be supported if sufficient early examples are attested in the text. A second point of view would see the latest dateable linguistic forms as reflecting the date at which the extant version of the text was reworked and given its final form. This viewpoint can also be supported if a sufficient number of these late forms can be identified and if they can be distinguished, where necessary, from forms which entered the tradition during the final phase(s) of manuscript transmission (if these phases

52 L. Breatnach, *A companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici* (2005), p. 40. **53** F. Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law* (1988), p. 245: 'it is possible that the scholiast who collected them [i.e., the texts of the *Senchas már*] was also responsible for the Introduction'. **54** Corthals, 'Die Trennung', 73. **55** N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967). **56** G. Mac Niocaill (ed.), 'Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla', *Studia Hibernica*, 3 (1963), 7–59. **57** The broader reflexes of this issue have been examined by R. Ó hUiginn, 'Rúraíocht agus rómánsaíocht: ceisteanna faoi fhorás an traidisiún', *Éigse*, 32 (2000), 77–87 at 85–7. On the reform movement see M. Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Pagans and holy men: literary manifestations of twelfth-century reform' in D. Bracken & D. Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century* (2006), pp 143–61 (esp. pp 151–5).

of textual development are seen to be distinct). The core issue in such analysis is one of proportionality, namely, the number of 'late' forms versus the number of 'early' ones attested in any single text or narrative portion.[58]

Such issues must be borne in mind when examining Finn-Cycle narratives. For example, *Bruiden Átha Í* contains a verbal form *do·thegat*,[59] mid-point between *tuthegot* (relative) of the Cambrai Homily (*c.*700) and *dotíagat* of the Würzburg Glosses (*c.*750),[60] i.e., *to-* has become *do-* but the *é* remains undiphthongized. Although an early to mid-eighth-century date is quite within the bounds of possibility for this composition, this particular example cannot bear too much weight, as the second manuscript of the text (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D iv 2 (1223)) reads *doteccat* here.[61] Similarly, 'Finn and the man in the tree', which probably also dates from the early to mid-eighth century, contains a couple of potentially significant later dating examples: *uball fin mblais* in the *roscad*[62] with initial *mbl-* (intermediate between classical OIr. *ml-* and MIr. *bl-*)[63] and the use of an independent object pronoun in the phrase *carais an ingen e*.[64] However, these examples are exceptional within the context of the narrative as a whole.

One interesting aspect of the analysis of early versus late linguistic forms concerns vocabulary. This is an issue that Murphy emphasized repeatedly in his analysis of the *Duanaire Finn* corpus;[65] typical of his approach are statements such as 'the vocabulary contains many words that became rare after the Middle Irish period'.[66] Particularly fruitful are the numerous loanwords from Latin, Anglo-Norman French, Old Norse and English which adorn Irish. It is often possible to trace the emergence of loanwords within the written corpus; however, the time-lag which may exist between a word being borrowed and appearing in the literature must always be allowed for.

9. Linguistic dating of Middle-Irish texts

Notwithstanding the many important articles on aspects of Middle Irish published before Mac Eoin delivered the Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture in

58 Cf. Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 120–1. **59** Hull, 'Two tales about Find', 324, l. 23. This is the 3rd pl. pres. ind. of *do-tét* 'comes' (with later lenition, probably after the preverb). **60** W. Stokes & J. Strachan (ed. and trans.), *Thesaurus palæohibernicus*, 2 vols (1901–3), ii, p. 247 ('Cambray Homily'), and i, p. 525 (Wb. 5a5). **61** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'Two tales about Finn', *Revue celtique*, 14 (1893), 241–9 at 243, l. 33; Hull, 'Two tales about Find', 324, l. 23, n. This is a post-Old-Irish form of the 3rd pl. pres. ind. of *do-icc* 'comes'. **62** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'Finn and the man in the tree', *Revue celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9 at 348, §4 (= D.A. Binchy, *Corpus iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols (1978), iii, p. 880.12). See also V. Hull, 'A rhetoric in "Finn and the man in the tree"', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 30 (1967), 17–20. **63** I have tentatively suggested a mid-ninth-century date for this transitional form elsewhere: review of C.A. Ireland (ed. and trans.), *Old Irish wisdom attributed to Aldfrith of Northumbria* (2000) in *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 432–4 at 433. **64** Meyer, 'Finn and the man in the tree', 346, §2 (= Binchy, *Corpus*, iii, p. 879.36). **65** He discusses it briefly as an issue in *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. cxv. **66** Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 112.

October 1981, there was only one grammar of Middle Irish available at the time.[67] This situation has been improved greatly in the interim with the publication of guides to the subject area by Jackson, Breatnach and McCone.[68] We are now in a better position than ever to itemize and analyze the language-changes which characterize the transition from Old to Middle Irish and to define the typical linguistic characteristics of Middle-Irish texts. Yet, such increase in knowledge has not led to precise dating of Middle-Irish texts comparable to the precision which Old-Irish compositions seem to offer.[69] Part of the problem is the lack of texts securely dated by non-linguistic factors.[70] This lack of close dating constitutes a major issue as most *fianaigecht* materials which precede *AS* date to the Middle-Irish period, and perhaps the most we can meaningfully aspire to is a relative chronology of such texts.

10. Dating thematic developments

There are thematic developments visible in the early *fianaigecht* corpus that may have dating implications. For example, the deliberate confusion of the *féinnid* and the *díberg(ach)* has been shown to be an early reaction by some clerical writers to the existence of *fían*-warriors:[71] therefore, negative portrayals are more likely to be earlier in date than positive ones.[72] Similarly, the presentation of the *fían* as a quasi-national standing army associated with Cormac mac Airt may be traced to the influence of the synthetic historians in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.[73] Thus, texts which have this feature may date from this period onwards or, at least, may have been reworked after this date. Finally, the image

67 G. Dottin, *Manuel d'irlandais moyen*, 2 vols (1913). **68** K. Jackson, 'The historical grammar of Irish: some actualities and some desiderata' in G. Mac Eoin et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the sixth international congress of Celtic studies* (1983), pp 1–18; idem (ed.), *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990), pp 73–140; L. Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge' in K. McCone et al. (eds), *Stair na Gaeilge* (1994), pp 221–333; K. McCone, *The early Irish verb* (1997), pp 163–241; idem, *A first Old Irish grammar and reader* (2005), pp 173–217. **69** However, K. McCone, 'The Würzburg and Milan glosses: our earliest sources of "Middle Irish"', *Ériu*, 36 (1985), 85–106 at 104, has warned about the dangers inherent in the linguistic dating of Old-Irish texts as 'the basic chronology is of very doubtful validity, depending as it does upon entirely a priori assumptions about the relationship between a disturbingly small number of texts'. Similarly, Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 109, has cautioned: 'there are some today who would hold that the apparently secure footing of Old Irish was itself deceptive, the lush green of the sphagnum moss concealing the treacherous pool beneath'. **70** Jackson, 'The historical grammar of Irish', p. 3. **71** For discussion see R. Sharpe, 'Hiberno-Latin *laicus*, Irish *láech* and the devil's men', *Ériu*, 30 (1979), 75–92; K. McCone, 'Werewolves, cyclopes, *díberga*, and *fianna*: juvenile delinquency in early Ireland', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 1–22. **72** However, Dr Carey points out to me that in many of the sources this distinction was, in fact, quite fluid, thus limiting its usefulness as a dating criterion. **73** See Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, i, pp xxxviii–xliii; Murphy, *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales*, p. 7.

of Finn burning his thumb on the 'salmon of knowledge', and thus attaining mantic ability, is first attested in writing in Middle Irish;[74] an alternate origin for Finn's 'thumb of knowledge' is preserved in two inter-related Old-Irish texts, *Marbad Cúil Duib* and 'Finn and the man in the tree'.[75] The change in presentation may reflect the influence of the Norse story of Sigurd (who accidentally burns his finger while cooking the heart of the dragon, Fáfnir, for Regin) on the Irish legend, though possible mutual influence of the traditions has not been disentangled to everyone's satisfaction.[76]

11. Dating Acallam na senórach

Because of its prominence and importance within the cycle, more ink has been spilt on the dating of *AS* than on the dating of any other *fianaigecht* narrative. All scholars who have expressed an interest in the matter agree that it was penned after 1142, the foundation date for Mellifont, as that monastery is mentioned in the text (though Myles Dillon raised the distinct possibility that this reference may in fact be 'a gloss inserted later').[77] Stokes thought that 'the mention of tithe points to the twelfth century or later';[78] however, Jackson pointed out that the issue of tithe payments surfaced long before this time.[79] The third dating criterion often mentioned is the following citation from the prose introduction to the *dinnshenchas* of Tonn Chlidna:

> Et fós ar an dinnsenchus cétna amail ro can Cailti i n-aimsir Pátraig ar an Agallaim do-rónsat ar dindshenc[h]us Erenn.[80]
>
> Concerning yet the same *dinnshenchas* as Caílte sang in the time of Patrick regarding the *Acallam* they made about the *dinnshenchas* of Ireland.

74 This attestation is in *Macgnímrada Finn*, possibly dating to the eleventh century. See K. Meyer (ed.), '*Macgnimartha Find*', *Revue celtique*, 5 (1882), 195–204 at 201, §18. **75** Hull, 'Two tales about Find', 329–33; Meyer, 'Finn and the man in the tree'. **76** R.D. Scott, *The thumb of knowledge in legends of Finn, Sigurd and Taliesin* (1930), is a detailed examination of the subject; see especially 'Chapter VI: the Norse Sigurd and the tradition of the thumb of knowledge' (pp 193–257). Dr Carey points out to me that there may be no necessity for connecting these tales as both reflect a widely attested story-type: see, for example, J. Grimm & W. Grimm, *Complete fairy tales* (2002), pp 76–9 ('The white snake'). J.F. Nagy, 'Intervention and disruption in the myths of Finn and Sigurd', *Ériu*, 31 (1980), 123–31 at 123, however, suggests that 'the parallel between the Irish hero Finn and the Norse hero Sigurd extends beyond the incident of the burnt finger' and posits 'the existence of a historical link' between the two traditions. **77** *Stories from the Acallam* (1970), p. 25. **78** W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na Senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte* iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438 at p. 281, n. 919. **79** *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, pp xxv–vi. Cf. R.D. Nuner, 'The verbal system of the *Agallamh na senórach*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 27 (1959), 230–309 at 233–4; N. Ó Muraíle, '*Agallamh na seanórach*' in P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Fhiannaíocht* (1995), pp 96–127 at pp 106–7; C. Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland* (1999), p. 53. **80** Book of Ballymote, fo. 200va51–b2. Cited from

Murphy dated this reference to the last quarter of the twelfth century and used it as his basis for dating *AS* to the same period;[81] however, this argument has since been undermined.[82]

The most important recent non-linguistic attempt to date *AS* has been made by Ann Dooley who points to the significance of two particular episodes in the text. One, the renaming of Dub as Radub and the promise of prosperity for his descendants (the Uí Raduib) because of his generosity with regard to giving a chariot to Patrick, may reflect early thirteenth-century politics in Connacht before the decline in importance of the Uí Raduib after the death of Cathal Croibderg (†1224).[83] Secondly, Dooley points to the de Courcy aim of establishing a cult of the three national saints in the mid-1180s and how this agenda may be reflected in *AS* with mention of 'triar álaind a n-aenbali'[84] ('a beautiful triumvirate in one place'). She is surely correct in seeing this as 'a much more significant dating indicator than the foundation of Mellifont'.[85]

When we turn to matters linguistic, the largest collection and analysis of forms is to be found in Nuner's essay on the verbal system of *AS*. That paper is still useful, notwithstanding the criticisms which have been brought to bear upon it.[86] One must note Nuner's *modus operandi* at the outset, however; he stuck rigidly to analyzing the prose, eschewing any attempt to grapple with the poetry because he believed that 'the verse is frequently too obscure to give exact indications of the state of the verb … and may well not be contemporary with the [prose] text itself'.[87] His conclusions are worth quoting in full: 'the prose sections … must date from a period at least as late as 1200–1225 … the evidence seems to point to the later of the two dates mentioned, 1225, as the more likely date of compilation'.[88]

Nuner remained optimistic that the date of *AS* could be fixed more precisely, though it does not seem probable that this sort of precision is achievable through linguistic analysis alone. Even such analysis as he proffers may be open to alternative interpretations. For example, he gives the percentage of infixed object pronouns as approximately 8%.[89] Although, on first appearance, this is similar to the statistics for the Annals of Ulster in the period 1200–50,[90] there

Ó Muraíle, '*Agallamh na seanórach*', p. 107 (see also p. 126, n. 22). Translation my own. **81** *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales*, pp 24–6. **82** Nagy, 'Oral tradition in the *Acallam na senórach*', p. 78; Ó Muraíle, '*Agallamh na seanórach*', p. 107. **83** 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 97–126 at 108–12 (for relevant text and translation) and 112–21 (for analysis). **84** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', l. 5432. **85** Dooley, 'The date and purpose', 101, n. 11. **86** See, for example, G. Mac Eoin, review of *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 27 (Heft 3/4) in *Studia Hibernica*, 1 (1961), 259–61. **87** Nuner, 'The verbal system', 236. **88** Ibid., 308–9. **89** Ibid., 304. **90** Statistics from S. Ó Catháin, 'Some studies in the development from Middle to Modern Irish, based on the Annals of Ulster', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 19 (1931–3), 1–47 at 5–6. However, Jackson, 'The historical grammar of Irish', 5–6, points out that the statistical sample utilized by Ó Catháin (here he has 11 examples)

are two further factors which must be taken into account. The first is genre: is it demonstrable, or even likely, that an annalistic collection would use the same language register as a long narrative text?[91] The second is detail: Ó Catháin points out that, in the Annals of Ulster, 'the last true example of the infixed pronoun occurs in 1165, and after 1202, no example occurs, not even of the pleonastic *-s-*, which is so common in Middle Irish literature'.[92] Fourteen of the twenty-one examples listed by Nuner of the infixed pronoun in the prose of *AS* show correct usage, the other seven show the spread of the form *-s-* to the third singular masculine; none of the examples indicate pleonastic usage.[93] Furthermore, we must bear in mind Damian McManus' analysis of the use of the infixed pronoun in Classical Irish which suggests that, although limited, the infixed pronoun was used most commonly with *ro-* and as a marker of the relative, similar to many of the examples preserved in *AS*.[94] These considerations pull the dating in different directions and serve to make the analysis of the dating implications of these forms less certain.

The other issue to be addressed is Nuner's assertion, noted above, that the verse 'may well not be contemporary with the [prose] text itself; whether earlier or later makes no difference, since it would in either case present a language not in accord with the prose text'. That this reflects the reality of the composition of *AS* has also been argued by James Carney,[95] and Geraldine Parsons has shown that some of the poems in *AS* probably had independent existences before being incorporated into the text.[96] A further illustrative example is the *dinnshenchas* poem on Almu beginning 'Almu Lagen, les na Fían' ('Almu I').[97] Not only is the poem interwoven into *Fotha catha Cnucha* with verses 3, 5 and 21–2 incorporated into the text,[98] but versions of verses 1–2 and 4–5 are also found in *AS*.[99] Whether the date of the poem is tenth century, as suggested by

might not be large enough to allow for solid conclusions to be drawn. **91** For example, Ó Catháin's analysis of the Gaelic Marco Polo (probably dating to the fourteenth century) shows 8 examples of the infixed pronoun compared with 43 of the independent object pronoun, a proportion similar to the Annals of Ulster in the second half of the twelfth century: 'Some studies in the development', 9–11. Ó Catháin believed this text to have been deliberately archaized, however. **92** 'Some studies in the development', 7. **93** Statistics from Nuner, 'The verbal system', 303–5. **94** 'An Nua-Ghaeilge Chlasaiceach' in K. McCone et al. (eds), *Stair na Gaeilge* (1994), pp 335–445 at pp 429–31 (§9.2). Cf. Jackson, 'The historical grammar of Irish', 11–12. **95** 'Two poems from *Acallam na senórach*' in J. Carney & D. Greene (eds), *Celtic studies* (1968), pp 22–32. See the important modifications of many of Carney's arguments (though not of those concerning dating) advanced by S. Ó Coileáin, 'The setting of *Géisid cúan*' in J. Carey et al. (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile* (2004), pp 234–48. **96** '*Acallam na senórach* as prosimetrum', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 24/25 (2009), 86–100. **97** Gwynn, *The metrical Dindshenchas*, ii, pp 72–7 (= R.I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (1954–83), iv, ll. 28167–254). **98** W.M. Hennessy (ed. and trans.), 'The battle of Cnucha', *Revue celtique*, 2 (1873), 86–93 at 88 and 90. **99** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1262–5 and 1278–81.

Meyer (followed by Scott),[1] or late eleventh- or early twelfth century, as put forward by Murphy,[2] it seems evident that it predates the compilation of *AS*, probably by a century at the least. Thus, it perfectly reflects the concerns voiced by Nuner fifty years ago. This issue will need to be addressed further in the context of dating *AS*.

Conclusions

Despite all the reservations expressed about the shortcomings of linguistic dating, it remains by far the most important tool in our armoury in attempting to grapple with the thorny issue of dating texts.[3] A number of the *fianaigecht* pieces discussed here have been (re-)edited and (re-)dated in the last century. Consequently, Meyer's attempts to place the extant Finn-Cycle oeuvre in relative chronological order needs re-attempting. In so doing, however, we must distinguish between the different types of texts involved. What is immediately evident as one works through his list is:

1. how many of the assembled pieces are not *fianaigecht* texts, but materials which contain references, often only fleeting, to Finn and his *fían*;
2. how establishing the extent of the early Finn Cycle will ultimately be as important a task as dating it;
3. how few extra Old- and Middle-Irish compositions have been included in the cycle in the last century.[4]

Impressionistic as Meyer's survey might have been, he was sufficiently rigorous to identify the vast majority of *fianaigecht* narratives dating to before *AS*; many of the extra materials noted since have been added to the list by Meyer himself.[5] His

1 Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxii, §XIV; Scott, *Thumb of knowledge*, p. 63. **2** *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. xxxiv (cf. p. lx). **3** The comment of Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', 124, is apposite here: 'When he comes to the actual task of dating the text, the investigator would be advised to explore all other avenues before attempting to date it from the linguistic evidence'. **4** Exceptions include: Stokes, 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*' (*Revue celtique*, 16), 147–8, §139 ['Áth Liac Find']; Gwynn, *The metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, pp 40–3 ['Áth Liac Find II']; K. Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Ailelb und Glangrēssach', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 12 (1918), 374–5; V. Hull, 'How Finn made peace between Sodelb and Glangrēssach', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 18 (1930), 422–4; idem, 'The death of Fothath Cananne', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 20 (1936), 400–4. **5** K.M., 'Erschienene Schriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 8 (1912), 599 (translated in second reprint of Meyer, Fianaigecht, p. 115) (titles as given in Appendix 2). One might also add the *Acallam bec* to this list as it appears to have been composed round the same time as *Acallam na senórach*. For partial text and translation see An Craoibhín [D. Hyde], '*An agallamh bheag*', *Lia Fáil*, 1 (1924), 79–107; W. Pennington, 'The little colloquy', *Philological Quarterly*, 9 (1930), 97–110. The only complete edition is J.S. Kühns, 'An edition and translation of the *Agallamh bheag* from the Book of Lismore' (2006).

relative chronology needs updating and linguistic analysis will remain the primary tool to be used in attempting to realize this goal. However, the close dating we might like to attach to medieval Irish texts, including *fianaigecht* compositions, may never be fully achievable.[6]

Appendix 1

I. Poem beg. 'Find Taulcha'
II. 'The quarrel between Finn and Oisín'
III. 'Finn and the man in the tree'
IV. *Reicne Fothaid Chanainne*
V. *Marbad Cúil Duib*
VI. *Bruiden Átha Í*
VII. 'Finn and Lomnae'
VIII. Incident from *Scéla Moshauluim* and *Sanas Cormaic* (s.v. *rincne*)
IX. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Áth Líac Finn
X. Poem beg. 'Innid scél scaílter n-airich'
XI. *Scél asa mberar combad hé Finn mac Cumaill Mongán*
XII. 'Finn and the boar of Druim Leithe'
XIII. Poems beg. 'Fíana bátar i nEmain' and 'Án-sin a maig Mic ind Óc'
XIV. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Almu
XV. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Fornocht
XVI. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Ráith Cnámrossa
XVII. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Tipra Sengarmna
XVIII. 'Finn and Gráinne'
XIX. 'Finn and the phantoms' (prose)
XX. Poem beg. 'Écht a Lagen for Leth Cuind'
XXI. Poems beg. 'Scél lem dúib' and 'Cétamon'
XXII. Poem beg. 'A Mór Maigne Moigi Siúil'
XXIII. *Tochmarc Ailbe*
XXIV. *Aithed Gráinne la Diarmaid*
XXV. *Úath Beinne Étair*
XXVI. *Úath Dercce Ferna/Echtra Fhinn i nDerc Fherna*
XXVII. 'Death of Finn'
XXVIII. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Carn Furbaide
XXIX. Poem from 'Mittelirische Verslehren'
XXX. *Fotha catha Cnucha*
XXXI. 'Finn and the phantoms' (poem)
XXXII. Two quatrains on the birth of Oisín
XXXIII. Notes on *Félire Óengusso*

6 I wish to thank Dr John Carey, Dr Joseph Flahive and the editors of the volume for their many helpful comments on the final draft of this article.

XXXIV. Mention of Finn in 'The Irish ordeals'
XXXV. Poem beg. 'Annálad anall uile'
XXXVI. Finn's death notice in the Annals of Tigernach
XXXVII. *Tesmolta Cormaic 7 aided Finn*
XXXVIII. *Bórama*
XXXIX. Stories from the prose *Dinnshenchas*
XL. Poem beg. 'Dám thrír táncatar ille'
XLI. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Snám Dá Én
XLII. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Roíriu
XLIII. *Macgnímrada Finn*
XLIV. Poem beg. 'Ro loiscit na lámasa'
XLV. Poem beg. 'A rí richid, réidig dam'
XLVI. Material from the metrical *Banshenchas*
XLVII. Material from the prose *Banshenchas*
XLVIII. Dialogue between Mac Lesc and Finn incorporating poems beg. 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Tánic sam'
XLIX. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Mag Dá Géise
L. Poem beg. 'Ogam i llía, lía úas lecht'
LI. Poem beg. 'Tuilsitir mo derca súain'
LII. Poem beg. 'Bec innocht lúth mo dá lúa'
LIII. Poem beg. 'Ochtur táncamar anúas'
LIV. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Tonn Chlidna
LV. *Áirem muintire Finn*
LVI. *Fianshruth*
LVII. Poem beg. 'Ligi Guill i mMaig Raigni'
LVIII. *Acallam na senórach*
LIX. 'The chase of Síd na mBan Finn'

Appendix 2

LX. Reference to Finn in *Timna Chathaír Máir*
LXI. Additional genealogical material concerning Finn and his family
LXII. *Dinnshenchas* of Cenn Finichair (prose and poetry)
LXIII. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Faffand
LXIV. Metrical *dinnshenchas* of Cuirrech Life
LXV. *Cath Slébe Caín*

‘Finn and the man in the tree’ as verbal icon

Kaarina Hollo

The Old-Irish tale known under the English title ‘Finn and the man in the tree’ is found in only one manuscript, namely, Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1337 (H.3.18) (sixteenth century). It forms part of the commentary on the *Senchas már* dated to the mid-/late eighth century.[1] ‘Finn and the man in the tree’ glosses the term *imbas forosnai*. It is composed of two episodes, the first of which functions as an aetiological account of how Finn acquired his ability to divine through putting his finger or thumb into his mouth. It is the second episode which concerns us here, in which Finn puts his gift of divination to use in identifying a mysterious figure he encounters while looking for a *gilla* (Derg Corra)[2] whom he has expelled from his camp.[3]

> Luid didiu Derc Corra for loinges 7 arfoēt caill 7 imthiged for luirgnib oss n-allta (si verum est) ar a ētrumai. Laa n-aill didiu do Find isin caill oc a cuingidh-som co n-aca Find in fer i n-ūachtar in craind 7 lon for a gūalainn ndeis 7 find-lestur n-uma for a lāimh clī, osē co n-usce 7 hē brecc bedcach and 7 dam allaith fo bun in craind 7 ba hē abras ind fhir teinm cnō 7 dobered leth n-airne na cnō don lun nobíth for a gūalaind ndeis, no-ithed feisin al-leth n-aill 7 doicsed a uball asin lestar n-uma būi for a lāimh clī 7 noranda[d] i ndē 7 docuireth a leth don dam allaid būi fo bun in craind. No-ithad som iarom in leth n-aill 7 no-ibed loim fair den uisce asin lestur huma būi for a lāim co mbo comōl dō frisin n-iich 7 a n-oss 7 in lon. Friscomarcar didiu a muinter do Finn cia bo hē isin crunn, ar nīnathgēntar som digh celtair dīchlithe būi imbe.[4]
>
> Then Derg Corra went into exile and took up his abode in a wood and used to go about on shanks of deer (si uerum est) for his lightness. One day as Finn was in the wood seeking him he saw a man in the top of a

1 L. Breatnach, *A companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici* (2005), p. 344. For the dating of ‘Finn and the man in the tree’ in particular see L. Breatnach, ‘Varia V’, *Ériu*, 41 (1990), 139–41 at 139–40. **2** On the name Derg (or Dercc) Corra see J. Carey, ‘Notes on two names’, *Éigse*, 35 (2006), 116–24. **3** The edition referred to in this article is K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), ‘Finn and the man in the tree’, *Revue celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9. For Finn’s divinatory speech (untranslated by Meyer) see V. Hull, ‘A rhetoric in “Finn and the man in the tree”’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 30 (1967), 17–20; J. Carey, ‘Obscure styles in medieval Ireland’, *Mediaevalia*, 19 (1996), 23–39 at 26–7. **4** Meyer, ‘Finn and the man in the tree’, 346 and 348.

> tree, a blackbird on his right shoulder and in his left hand a white vessel of bronze, filled with water, in which there was a skittish trout, and a stag at the foot of the tree. And this was the practice of the man, cracking nuts; and he would give half the kernel of a nut to the blackbird that was on his right shoulder while he would himself eat the other half; and he would take an apple out of the bronze vessel that was in his left hand, divide it in two, throw one half to the stag that was at the foot of the tree, and then eat the other half himself. And on it he would drink a sip of the bronze vessel that was in his hand, so that he and the trout and the stag and the blackbird drank together. Then his followers asked of Finn who he in the tree was, for they did not recognise him on account of the hood of disguise[5] which he wore.[6]

The tale has been perceptively analyzed by Joseph Nagy who describes the expelled Derg Corra as being in a condition of oscillation between the states of culture and nature:

> the gilla, a member of a marginal human organization (the fían) before his expulsion, now lives together with beasts in a natural setting and even shares his food with them. The fundamental cultural distinctions between human and animal, hunter and game, and consumer and consumable are not in force here.[7]

Nagy also notes the relevance of elements of the final tableau to the medieval Irish conceptualization of poetic inspiration.[8]

Scholars have shown interest in the possible mythological or religious hinterlands suggested by this tale. Anne Ross cautiously links Derg Corra with the horned or antlered deity often referred to as Cernunnos (as Ross notes, this name is only found in one fragmentary Parisian inscription from the reign of Tiberius, AD 14–37).[9] Ross, in reference to 'Finn and the man in the tree', writes:

> Keeping in mind the dangers of attempting to interpret the iconography by reference to some single descriptive passage in the vernacular litera-

5 *Celta(i)r* is not a standard word for a hood; it is, more generically, something which conceals, often magically or miraculously. St Finnchua's mother is protected by a *celtchair dichlethi* from her royal pursuer by the miraculous virtue of the unborn saint in her womb: W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), *Lives of saints from the Book of Lismore* (1890), p. 85. A *cealtar* is placed by God on the three marvellous drinking-horns of Cormac úa Cuinn: E.J. Gwynn (ed. and trans.), 'The three drinking horns of Cormac ua Cuinn', *Ériu*, 2 (1905), 186–8 at 186. Also, Patrick and his companions are saved from King Lóegaire by a *dícheltair* that causes them to appear as deer: K. Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic* (1939), p. 31. **6** Meyer, 'Finn and the man in the tree', 347 and 349. **7** *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985), p. 137. **8** Ibid. **9** *Pagan Celtic Britain* (1967), p. 135.

> tures, it nevertheless seems that in this particular instance there is a good case for regarding this as a significant passage from the mythological viewpoint. It would be unrealistic to suggest that the Irish 'Peaked Red One' is identifiable either with Vosegus or with Cernunnos in his role as nurturer of the animals, but nevertheless, it can hardly be held that the cult legends which gave rise to the symbolism of these monuments can have differed greatly from those in which this extraordinary scene, described in a later and Christian milieu, but in which the pagan details would seem to have been so faithfully preserved, originated.[10]

In her survey of visual representations of horned and antlered divinities, Ross includes several from Ireland: the horned figure flanked by wolves on the uppermost panel on the east side of the Market Cross at Kells, the Tandragee idol, the Boa Island figure and the Carndonagh pillar.[11] Her description of a figure on the north pillar at Clonmacnoise as 'antlered' corresponds with that of Françoise Henry in 1940.[12] More than twenty years later, Henry had become more cautious. While noting the iconographic similarity between this figure and some representations of the Cernunnos-type divinity, the 'antlers', however, are no longer confidently seen – we have rather 'une broussaille d'entrelacs ou de ramure' surrounding the figure's head.[13] The interpretation of much early medieval Irish figural sculpture can rarely be argued to be definitive; for example, it has been suggested that the 'horns' of the Carndonagh figure may be better interpreted as the elaborated hair of the Virgin Mary.[14] Nevertheless, one can say that there are a few examples of horned or antlered humanoid figures in the early medieval Irish sculptural corpus. Although Derg Corra is not antlered, he does assimilate in another way to the form of a deer, is pursued like one, and appears with one and with other animals in the final tableau.

The status of lore concerning Finn and *fiana* in Ireland during the Old-Irish period is hard to ascertain. Kim McCone makes a strong case for the church's antipathy towards the social institution of the *fían* during the early medieval period. He argues that the relative paucity of *fianaigecht* literature during the same period could be related to this antipathy:

> Preceding chapters have documented at some length the early Irish Church's success in adapting or reinterpreting appropriate pre-Christian

10 Ibid., p. 338. **11** Ibid., pp 145–8. To these, one can add the statue from near Armagh brought to the attention of the Ulster Museum in 2002, the face of which is extremely similar to that of the Tandragee idol, including, on its forehead, 'two hollowed protrusion very reminiscent of the stumps left on the head of a red deer after the shedding of its antlers': R. Warner, 'Two pagan idols – remarkable new discoveries', *Archaeology Ireland*, 17 (2003), 24–7 at 27. **12** *Irish art in the early Christian period* (1940), p. 108. **13** *L'art irlandais* (1963), p. 179. **14** D. Kelly, 'The Virgin and Child in Irish sculpture' in C. Bourke (ed.), *From the isles of the North* (1995), pp 197–204 at pp 200–3.

> concepts and institutions as necessary, the upshot frequently being an antique shell … capable of housing a new or significantly modified ideology attuned to ecclesiastical requirements. Although Old Testament figures such as Jephthah of Gilead … and, above all, King David himself had considerable potential as justificatory models for a youth spent in the wilderness at the head of a band of outlaws prior to becoming the leader or king of settled society, the clerical establishment tended to pass this option over in favour of outright condemnation of the *fían* and what it stood for. Indeed, given the centrality of sexual licence, gratuitous violence and pillaging to this way of life, it is hard to see how the church could have reached a meaningful compromise compatible with fundamental Christian tenets. Moreover, any temptation to do so was doubtless minimized by the *fían*-members' general lack of property and their potential to disrupt settled society.[15]

It could be, then, that the growth in *fianaigecht* as a literary genre in the eleventh to fourteenth centuries was in inverse relationship to the decline of the *fían* as a viable institution, and that the former was at least partially caused or enabled by the latter.

This model, however, leaves us with some questions to be answered. One is raised by the (probably eighth-century) decorated slab at Drumhallagh, Co. Donegal (see figure 3.1).[16] Here we have, in the upper part of the slab, a thumb-sucking figure 'repeated twice for the sake of symmetry'.[17] This figure is overwhelmingly suggestive of Finn. The prominent position in the upper half of the slab between the upright and transverse arms of the cross makes it highly unlikely that the representation is intended as an insignificant one. Henry suggests that Finn is here in 'the capacity of seer who foretold the coming of Christ'.[18] This is, no doubt, primarily suggested to her by the overall iconography of the slab, as we have no written evidence for Finn taking this specific role, although we have later references to Finn prophesying the arrival of various saints.[19] If there were indeed an antipathy towards the institution of the *fían* and the literature associated with it in the early medieval Irish church, then the choice of Finn for the decoration of the Drumhallagh slab would need explaining.[20]

15 *Pagan past and Christian present* (1990), p. 218. **16** See Henry, *Irish art*, p. 108. This dating has been challenged by Peter Harbison who would assign it and the other north-western monuments (Duvillaun More, Inishkea North, Fahan, Inishkeel and the Carndonagh stele) to the ninth century (cited in H.A. King, 'Nobber's early medieval treasures revealed', *Archaeology Ireland*, 19 (2005), 21–4 at 24). **17** Henry, *Irish art*, p. 109. **18** Ibid., p. 110. **19** See E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, p. lxii. **20** The thumb-in-mouth 'prophetic gesture' is found in Germanic contexts from the fifth century onwards. Of particular interest is the iconography of a belt-buckle found in a sixth-century Burgundian Christian graveyard at Echallens-Les Condemines, in which a cross is

Regardless of the actual status of the *fían* and of the church's view of that social institution, it was possible to deploy a figure suggestive of Finn on an overtly Christian and undoubtedly high-status monument in early medieval Ireland. If a Christian investment of meaning in, and incorporation of, this figure is possible in a visual medium, could the same be happening around the same time in the written? This is the question addressed in the following discussion of 'Finn and the man in the tree'.

When Finn goes to seek Derg Corra, he finds him in a form that it is, at first, unrecognizable, engaged in a repetitive sharing of food and drink with animals. Note that the verbs used to describe the activity in the tableau are in the imperfect, indicating repetition or habit: *dobered*, *nobīth*, *no-ithed*, *doicsed*, *noranda*[*d*], *docuireth*, *no-ithad*, *no-ibed*. This break from the preterite verbs of the surrounding text removes the scene from the narrative, creating a pause. The actions are presented as habitual or repeated, bringing them into the realm of ritual and the scene into the realm of the atemporal.[21] Normal linear time (with its grammatical concomitant, the preterite) is only resumed with Finn's placing his thumb in his mouth in order to prophesy.

The passage is highly visual and impresses with its simplicity and clarity. It is possible to build a clear image of the scene in the mind's eye from the verbal cues given. There is very little detail. The reader is given the objects present, their spatial distribution and the significant gestures of the central figure of the man. The fish is described as *bedcach*, and the vessel's material is indicated, but apart from this there are no adjectives or adverbs in the passage. The focus, then, is upon the elements of the scene – tree, man, vessel, water, fish, bird, stag, nuts, apples – and the relationship between them. We do not know anything about the appearance of the man or his dress. It is essential to the surrounding narrative that he is unrecognizable and unrecognized until the moment of divination.

I have already referred to the interpretations of Ross and Nagy of this tableau. I wish to suggest a third one: that the encounter of Finn and Derg Corra was designed by its author, no doubt incorporating pre-existing material from his native Irish tradition, to be read as a meditation upon the crucifixion and the Eucharist.

As succinctly stated by Gertrud Schiller:

> the Tree of Life and the Water (River, Fountain, or Well) of Life … are not merely *topoi* for the Paradise of creation and the future Paradise, but were related, as we have already seen repeatedly, to the sacrificial and redemptive Death of Christ.[22]

flanked by two standing thumb-in-mouth male figures: M. Watt, 'The gold-figure foils (*"guldgubbar"*) from Uppåkra' in L. Larsson (ed.), *Continuity for centuries* (2004), pp 167–221 at p. 207. What concerns us primarily here, of course, is the relevance of this gesture in the Irish context, rather than the origin of the iconography. **21** On ritual and time see B. Adam, *Time* (2004), pp 77–8. **22** *Iconography of Christian art*, ii, trans. J. Seligman (1972), p. 133. E.

The poem *De Pascha* (fourth- to sixth-century), transmitted into the ninth century among the works of Cyprian, contains elements which are also found in a range of later texts. It relates that a new tree grew from a slip cut from the Tree of Knowledge (made barren by Adam's sin) and that the first fruit (*fructus*) of this new tree ripened on the Cross, fell to the Earth, and was then resurrected in 'the form of a tree of cosmological dimensions'.[23] This last tree's plentiful and nourishing fruit (referred to as *poma*) is identified with the Eucharist, and the tree itself provides a ladder to heaven for those who approach it after having washed themselves in the fountain of baptism at its base. Thus, we have a theological and iconographic association of the tree/Cross and what it signifies (Christ's Passion and the promise of resurrection) with the sacrament of the Eucharist.[24] As Catherine Karkov noted, in early medieval Ireland there was a heavy emphasis on eucharistic symbolism, a 'concern with eucharistic imagery that runs throughout early Irish art and literature'.[25] In early Irish art we find, in particular, the combination of Cross and chalice to have been much explored.[26]

If we view 'Finn and the man in the tree' in light of the powerful associations between the Cross/tree and the Eucharist fostered in texts such as *De Pascha*, it may come to seem somewhat less exceptional and idiosyncratic. The man in the tree is holding a vessel filled with water and sharing food and drink with a bird, a stag and a fish, the last contained in the vesssel.[27] The nut is first divided, then shared between the man and bird. The apple is divided and shared between the man and stag. The man then drinks from the vessel. The eucharistic overtones of this are inescapable for an informed modern reader; how much more compelling they would have been for an early medieval Irish one? This shared consumption is obviously reminiscent of the fraction, distribution and

Simmons Greenhill, in her article 'The child in the tree', *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 323–71, skilfully adumbrates the history of the association of tree-imagery with the Cross of Christ's crucifixion and humankind's redemption. J. Carey, *Ireland and the grail* (2007), pp 94–6, has suggested 'Finn and the man in the tree' as a possible source for the child in the tree of Wauchier de Denain's Grail-continuation, the main subject of Simmons Greenhill's article. **23** Simmons Greenhill, 'The child in the tree', 339. **24** The liturgy also provided examples of the interpretation of the Cross as redeemed and redeeming tree. See the *praefatio* of the Holy Cross, quoted in Schiller, *Iconography*, p. 134: 'Death came from a tree, life was to spring from a tree; he who conquered on the wood was also to be conquered on the wood'. **25** 'The chalice and the Cross in insular art' in R.M. Spearman & J. Higgit (eds), *The age of migrating ideas* (1993), pp 237–44 at p. 238. **26** Ibid., p. 243. **27** If one is searching for an artefactual analogue to the image of a bronze bowl containing a lively fish, the great bronze hanging bowl found in Mound 1 in Sutton Hoo, with its elaborate ornament and swivelling enamelled fish inside, comes to mind. The question of this masterwork's time and place of making is still open, although Susan Youngs would date it to *c.* AD 600 or earlier: 'Anglo-Saxon, Irish and British relations: hanging-bowls reconsidered', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 157 (2009), 205–30 at 230.

consumption of the body of Christ (the host, here the apple and nuts). The apparent slip, in saying that all drink together when clearly only the man has done so, is readily explicable in a eucharistic context. The text states 'no-ibed loim fair den uisce asin lestur huma būi for a lāim co mbo comōl dō frisin n-iich 7 a n-oss 7 in lon' ('He used to drink a sip of the water from the bronze vessel that was in his hand so that he was drinking together with the fish and the deer and the blackbird'). Although there is good evidence that communion in both kinds was commonly practiced in early medieval Ireland, there were situations in which some partaking in communion took the Host only.[28] It was only strictly necessary for the celebrant to drink the wine for a valid communion. However, all present and partaking of the Host were nonetheless participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist and could be seen to be drinking or celebrating (an extended meaning of *comól*)[29] together.

What of those enjoying this communion with Derg Corra? Fish, deer and blackbirds are all found elsewhere in early medieval Irish literature, with the first two especially relevant to the figure of Finn in his roles as poet and hunter. This might be enough in itself to justify their inclusion here.[30] However, I would suggest that the choice of animals has a further significance and that we have here a representation of the *tria genera animantium*. As Egon Wamers writes:

> one of the central motif-complexes in early Christian art (and theology) during late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, is 'the cross with the representatives of animated creation' … As the early Church Fathers and theologians understood it, this creation was renewed by Christ's crucifixion, symbolised by the cross. In the early Middle Ages the *recapitulatio creationis* became a basic idea of the Christian doctrine of redemption.
>
> The cross surrounded by representatives of the three genera of animals, the *tria genera animantium*, became a permanent christological motif. Examples include a choir-screen from Zîb (Syria) …, the older Lindau book-cover …, the Enger burse-reliquary …, an initial page in the *Sacramentarium Gelasianum* and the portable altar of Essen Werden … The Muotathal reliquary, in Switzerland, shows a particular variant in conjunction with the stag motif. In each case, the cross is shown surrounded by the three genera of animals.[31]

28 The more general phenomenon of the 'gradual withdrawal of the chalice' from the laity starts in the ninth century. See N. Mitchell, *Cult and controversy* (1982), p. 197. **29** *DIL*, s.v. **30** Although it lies beyond the scope of this paper, I will simply note here that a more wide-ranging study would include a consideration of literary versions of the hermit's life such as the ninth-/tenth-century poem beginning 'A Marbáin, a díthrubaig' (commonly known as 'King and hermit'); here the hermit, Marbán, describes his forest hermitage with its blackbird, stags, streams, apples, nuts and fish, among other features. For the poem see G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Early Irish lyrics* (1956), pp 10–19. **31** E. Wamers, 'Behind animals, plants

The tableau in 'Finn and the man in the tree' shows a man in a tree, sharing in communion with a deer (a creature of the earth), a bird (a creature of the air) and a fish (a creature of the water): the *tria genera* are all represented. In the crucifixion scene on the Essen-Werden portable altar, we have a triumphant crucified Christ with representatives of the *tria genera animantium* snugly aligned around his legs, trunk, arms and head within the cruciform field around the body. Whether the author of 'Finn and the man in the tree' had seen such representations or not is not recoverable; that he or she was familiar with the theology underlying them is highly likely. The arresting Essen-Werden image serves as a striking visual parallel to the *ekphrasis* of our text.[32]

Our tale ends with a recognition.[33] But before Derg Corra can be recognized, he must first become unrecognizable. He not only communes with the stag – he partially assimilates to the form of one himself. This is reminiscent of the transformation of St Patrick and his companions into deer in Muirchú's Life of Patrick. In both cases, the transformation occurs in the context of a hostile pursuit, and in both cases the pursued evades capture. In both, authority figures (the pagan King Lóegaire and the *fían*-leader Finn) are thwarted.

In our text, however, the quarry does not simply outrun its pursuers. When the renowned hunter, Finn, who has been searching for Derg Corra, finds him, the image of the hybrid man-stag has resolved itself into its component parts. The stag, rather than running, is found at rest at the base of the tree, eating the shared apples, as though it has found a place of sanctuary or protection. Rather than killing the stag, Finn, with the reader, observes the scene. When his men enquire as to the man's identity, Finn performs a divinatory act and utters a *retoiric* that reveals him to be Derg Corra.

The image of the deer or stag is one with a range of associations in the Christian iconographical tradition. In the Song of Songs, the thirsty deer figures the soul that thirsts for God. In Habakkuk 3:19, Samuel 22:34 and Psalm 18:33, God is said to make the persecuted speaker's feet like those of the deer and to enable him to walk in high places. Derg Corra's going about 'on shanks of deer' could well represent, at least in part, a literalization of this image on the part of the Irish author (*si verum est* would then be a later commentator's contribution).

Another common medieval trope was that of the deer as an allegory of Christ. As Amy Remensnyder notes:

and interlace: Salin's Style II on Christian objects', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 157 (2009), 151–204 at 159–61. As Wamers acknowledges at p. 155, we are indebted to Victor H. Elbern for our understanding of this motif-complex. **32** For an illustration see Wamers, 'Behind animals', 161. **33** Interestingly, Derg Corra's action of sharing food and drink with the bird, stag and fish is termed an *abras* ('gesture'). Although it is not the actual trigger for his recognition, one could tentatively propose that it is reminiscent of Christ's breaking of bread at Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), through which gesture his followers suddenly know the man before them as the risen Christ.

> this interpretation was based on traditions of classical natural history filtered through the second-century *Physiologus*, the grandfather of the medieval bestiary tradition … The Christological value of the deer … is made concrete in several legends in which a crucifix appears between or replaces the deer's antlers. A church is then founded on the spot of the unmistakable epiphany … Often the deer … leads human beings to [the sacred site] … In these instances, the animal functions as a guide, according to a general folklore motif. Animals as revealers of safe passages, new lands, and sacred sites were part of the medieval imaginative stock.[34]

Remensnyder's main object of study is a body of southern French legends of the tenth to thirteenth centuries. She notes that often this motif of revelation of a sacred site, 'typically a hermitage or ruined church', by an animal takes a more specific form. An animal, usually a deer that is in some way exceptional, is pursued by a king or prince.

> This animal finds sanctuary with the hermit or at the altar of the crumbling church. The hunters and their horses and dogs are struck with paralysis and their prey, rendered docile by the hermit … goes scot free. If he is wise, the prince realizes that he has stumbled on a sacred place and decides to found a church or monastery there.[35]

A prime example of this motif can be found in the corpus of legend surrounding St Aegidius or St Gilles.[36] Gilles is a hermit living in a cave by the banks of the River Rhône. He is nourished by the milk of a deer that has befriended him. When Flavius, king of the Goths, comes hunting in the forest, he and his men start the saint's deer which escapes to the saint's cave, eluding her pursuers. On the second day, the same thing happens, and the king, sensing something miraculous in the air, asks the bishop of Nîmes to accompany on the hunt on the third day. This time, the deer is followed to the thicket surrounding Gilles' cave. A hunter, shooting blindly, wounds, not the deer, but the saint, who

34 *Remembering kings past* (1995), pp 61–2. **35** Ibid., p. 63. **36** Gilles is, of course, not the only saint associated with deer. St Eustace, for example, undergoes a conversion to Christianity after a deer, which the aristocratic Roman general has been hunting, reveals to him a vision of Christ hanging on a cross between his antlers. In some versions, the deer itself speaks to Eustace, in others to Christ. The earliest certain evidence for the cult of St Eustace is sixth-/seventh-century, and there seems to have been a church dedicated to him in Rome by the eighth century (J. Bugslag, 'Eustace' in P.G. Jestice (ed.), *Holy people of the world* (2004), pp 264–5). Iconographically, the material concerning Eustace is highly relevant to our text: we have here the 'tree' of the antlers supporting the tree of the cross and Christ, with a deer at its base. I have focused on Gilles here, however, because of the parallels with 'Finn and the man in the tree' in terms of the discourse on the relation between secular and monastic authority discussed below.

emerges and stands, bleeding and stoic, outside the cave. The king, bishop and entire entourage fall at the hermit's feet and beg his forgiveness, which he grants in exchange for immunity for the deer. As Remensnyder notes, 'this episode is certainly about theophany. The site of the future monastery is consecrated not only by Gilles' presence but by its designation by an animal allegorical of Christ'.[37] The saint has been made Christ-like himself through his wounds and his intimate association with the deer whose milk sustains him. However, this theophany is 'complemented by a statement about the abbey's boundaries and its relations with the representatives of human power'.[38] In this specific context, during the late eleventh century, the abbey of St Gilles was involved in serious conflicts with the counts of Tolouse and Saint-Gilles as well as with the bishops of Nîmes:

> The hunt and its startling climactic image function specifically in the context of this debate about the boundaries of power and monastic identity … The hunt … could become a trope for expressing the abbey's (desired) relations with the larger social world.[39]

In the forest and the hunt, an area and an activity associated with royal and aristocratic control and privilege, the exercise of secular, and in this case also episcopal, power has been thwarted.

The parallels with the (much earlier) Irish text are obvious and striking.[40] The ways in which Gilles and Derg Corra are assimilated to the deer are different but parallel. As mentioned above, Gilles is nourished by the deer and is wounded in its place; intending to shoot the deer, the huntsman shoots Gilles instead. Derg Corra becomes deer-like when pursued and, when he is finally found, a deer is at the base of his tree, clearly unafraid of the mighty hunter, Finn, as though it is under Derg Corra's protection. Although Derg Corra, unlike Gilles, is not represented as a conventional hermit in the prose text, he seems to be accorded something of this status in the closing *rhetoric* which contains the phrase 'in díthraib Derg Corra' ('Derg Corra of the desert').[41] The word *díthrub* has overwhelmingly monastic associations – it is where saints and others go when they wish to pursue an eremetical existence; a *díthrubach* is a hermit.[42] Both Gilles and Derg Corra are pursued by those whose sovereignty over the forests in which they hunt and over their prey would normally go unchallenged. Both tales, as Remensnyder argues for the legend of St Gilles and as I would argue for 'Finn and the man in the tree', end in striking tableaus that are in and of themselves

37 *Remembering kings past*, p. 64. **38** Ibid. **39** Ibid., p. 65. **40** I should make it clear here that I am not arguing for any relationship of filiation between these texts. Rather, I am examining the ways in which, in their distinct and separate contexts, the texts employ the narrative complex of the theophanic hunt of the deer in strikingly similar ways. **41** Hull, 'A rhetoric', 19–20. **42** *DIL*, s.vv.

revelatory theophanies. The story of Gilles' encounter with king and bishop can be seen to make a statement about the boundaries of abbatial control. Can something similar be said about 'Finn and the man in the tree'?

John Soderberg has argued that the deer was used in the early medieval Irish monastic context in discourses around identity and in the conceptualization of the monasteries' socio-economic relationships with the secular world.[43] He has paid particular attention to the representation of stags on Irish crosses, noting that hunting imagery involving dogs and horses appears on the bases of crosses. On the lower portion of the shaft, one finds solitary, captured deer and, on the upper portion, lone deer (uncaptured). Taking into account the likely siting of early Irish monumental sculpture at the boundaries of monastic sites, Soderberg sees these representations of aristocratic activities such as hunting and warfare as making a statement about the limits of secular power and jurisdiction (i.e., the cross would signal both physically and symbolically 'thus far but no further'). The object of the aristocratic hunt, the deer, functions both as a symbol of Christ and as an emblem of the immunity (real or desired) from persecution of the monastic community and those it sheltered.

> With this imagery in mind, the significance of the sorting of the stages of the hunt becomes more clear. If the hunt of the stag was indeed linked to the crucifixion of Christ, then the static captured deer of the upper registers becomes the type of the antetypical deer in the lower regions. The antetype (secular hunting) foreshadows something that exi[s]ts out of time, a contrast which is emphasized by the tumult of the pursuit scenes and the static nature of the captured or solitary deer. This imagery amplifies the same message as the general confinement of secular activities to the base of the crosses.[44]

Soderberg relates this iconography to the notion of monasteries as 'cities of refuge', concluding that 'monasteries and deer were closely associated with each other in a manner that identifies monasteries with a realm beyond royal or secular control'.[45]

Soderberg does not include 'Finn and the man in the tree' in his consideration of relevant literary sources, but it suits his analysis well. In his role as hunter, Finn here figures the aristocratic secular world. The pursued man and deer are presented, when he finds them, in a static fashion and as though within an enclosure or sanctuary where they cannot be harmed, echoing the sanctuary of the monastery. The narrative proceeds from the 'tumult' of the chase, analogous to that represented on the base of a high cross, to the stasis of the solitary deer rep-

43 'Wild cattle: red deer in the religious texts, iconography and archaeology of early medieval Ireland', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 8 (2004), 167–83. **44** Ibid., 176. **45** Ibid., 181.

resented on the cross shaft which represent the crucified and/or risen Christ. The unmistakeably eucharistic imagery of the scene further cements this text into the early medieval monastic context. It does not seem that 'Finn and the man in the tree' can be read as a foundation legend for a specific monastery, unlike the legend of St Gilles; it does, however, partake in a broader discourse around the relationship between secular and monastic power in early medieval Ireland.

In conclusion, I hope a case has been made here for 'Finn and the man in the tree' as a skilfully composed reflection upon the mystery and salvific power of Christ's crucifixion and the Eucharist that also reflects the tension between secular and monastic power in early medieval Ireland. What light does 'Finn and the man in the tree' shed on the hypothesis of clerical hostility to the social institution of the *fian* and associated cultural phenomena in early medieval Ireland? The depiction of Finn in this tale is arguably not a positive one. He is suspicious, vindictive and engages in a man-hunt. Yet, he does not kill the stag or the man that he finds. Rather, he engages in an act of divination that reveals the mysterious figure in the tree to be Derg Corra. Finn plays a dual role in this tale, as does the king in the story of St Gilles. As a hunter, Finn represents the forces of secular power; Derg Corra and his deer's immunity from harm represent the ideal relationship between secular and monastic power, as seen from the monastic point of view. As a seer, Finn plays the same role as appears to be the case on the Drumhallagh cross-slab – as a prophet of or witness to Christ and the mystery of the Passion and the Eucharist. If the early medieval Irish church did find itself in a state of antagonism with *fiana*, both tale and cross-slab represent a bold attempt to co-opt the figure of Finn for the church's own purposes.

Finn, Ferchess and the *rincne*: versions compared

Sharon J. Arbuthnot

An elusive entry contained in the medieval Irish glossary, *Sanas Cormaic*,[1] provides an account of the role of Finn úa Baíscne in events leading up to the death of Lugaid mac Macniad/(Lugaid) Mac Con.[2] The entry in question appears in both the shorter and longer recensions of the glossary in similar form, but there are a few telling points of departure between the extant manuscript copies. Both Kuno Meyer[3] and Whitley Stokes[4] published transcriptions of this material. I give here Meyer's text, as it appeared in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, to which I have added an apparatus showing variant readings from other extant manuscript witnesses where these are relevant to the discussion which follows:[5]

> Rincne quasi quinque. Unde dicitur: Ferchess mac Mosecis dixit intan bōi Find ūa Baiscni oc āirim cach cōicir ar n-ūair do slūag Luigdech maic

1 On *Sanas Cormaic*, its extant manuscript copies and recensions, and on Irish glossaries and glossary-making in general see P. Russell, 'The sounds of a silence: the growth of Cormac's glossary', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 15 (1988), 1–30. **2** For some remarks on the attested forms of this character's name and suggestions as to the etymology of the various elements see M. O Daly (ed. and trans.), *Cath Maige Mucrama* (1975), pp 9–10; K. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature* (1990), pp 47–8; J. Koch, 'A swallowed onomastic tale in *Cath Maige Mucrama*?' in J. Carey et al. (eds), *Ildánach, ildírech* (1999), pp 63–80; S. Arbuthnot, review of Carey et al., *Ildánach, ildírech* (1999) in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 43 (2002), 96–9. **3** *Fianaigecht* (1910), pp xx–xxi; '*Sanas Cormaic: an Old-Irish glossary*' in O.J. Bergin et al., *Anecdota from Irish manuscripts*, 5 vols (1907–13), iv, pp 1–128 at §1084. **4** *Three Irish glossaries* (1862), pp 38–9; 'On the Bodleian fragment of Cormac's glossary', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1901), 149–206 at 186; 'Cormacs Glossar nach der Handschrift des Buches der Uí Maine', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1919), 290–319 at 318. **5** Meyer's transcription was based on Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318 (H.2.16; the Yellow Book of Lecan), col. 78. Variants are from Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 16 (*an Leabhar Breac*), p. 271a (= B in apparatus), RIA MS D ii 1 (the Book of Uí Maine), fo. 125va (= M), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 610, fo. 85vb (= La), Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1317 (H.2.15b), pp 35b–c (= H^{1a}) and 100b (= H^{1b}), and Dublin, University College, OFM, MS A 12, p. 35a (formerly, Killiney, Franciscan MS A 12) (= K). B, M and La belong to the short recension of *Sanas Cormaic*, the others belong to the long recension. However, interlinear and marginal addenda made to the *Leabhar Breac* copy indicate that the text was collated with another version of the glossary, seemingly one related to that which survives in the Yellow Book of Lecan (cf. P. Russell, '*Dúil Dromma Cetta* and Cormac's glossary', *Études celtiques*, 32 (1996) 147–74 at 157).

> Macniadh do chuinchidh ind fēnnedo .i. Ferchis. Adacht Ferchess tren foa chnāmæ sech Finn 7 dollēicci in slig for Lugaid conidromarb 7 asbert occa rincne quasi carincne, riis[6] rīg .i. ar ba heth atbeired Find bēus ō'trīmed cach cōicer a ūair. Rincni quasi quinque.
>
> Rincne] ringcne B, rindcne M, ringcni H[1a]; Macniadh] < >Con B, M*a*cnéit La, Macnéit M; tren foa chnāmæ] triana fuachtn–e B, tren foa cnairai M; rincne] ringcne B, rindcne M, ringcne H[1a]; quasi] *om*. BLaM; carincne] carimcne La, carmcne (?) M (c *above line*); riis rīg] ris rig B, ris riig LaM; Rincni] rindcne M

Two translations of this entry are known to me. John O'Donovan worked mainly from the *Leabhar Breac* copy of the glossary. His translation runs:

> Ringcne quasi *quinque*: inde dixit Ferches (the poet) when Finn ua Baiscni was reckoning every pentad in succession of the hosts of MacCon, to seek the Fian of him, i.e. Ferches. Then Ferches passed with fury [?] by Finn, and cast the spear at Lugaid so that he was dead, and he said *Ringcne* (quasi *carincne*) *rus rig* ['a little pentad is a king's reproach'], for this was what Finn used to say still when he counting every pentad in turn.[7]

Stokes relied on the copy of the text which survives in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 610. He rendered this into English as:

> *Rincne*, quasi *quinque*. Hence said Ferches, son of MoSechess, when Finn grandson of Baiscne was counting every five in turn of the host of Lugaid, the son of Mac-neit, to seek the champion Ferches. With that Ferches gave … past Finn and cast the spear on Lugaid and killed him, and said thereat *Rincne cairincne ris* (leg. *rus*?) *rig*, for that is what Finn used to say when he was numbering every pentad in turn, *Rincne* quasi *quinque*.[8]

Quite apart from the fact that a section in the middle is translated only with an accompanying question-mark (O'Donovan) or not at all (Stokes), this entry is perplexing on a number of fronts.[9] It is not clear why Ferchess, who is throwing a spear, would (as it seems) repeat the words of Finn who is counting troops. Also, other than being a word which sounds somewhat similar to Latin *quinque* 'five' and which, according to the principles of medieval etymology,[10] ought

6 Meyer read *rus* here but the manuscript has *riis*. **7** J. O'Donovan (trans.) & W. Stokes (ed.), *Sanas Chormaic* (1868), p. 142. In a note on this entry, it is made clear that the translation of the last sentence is based on the Yellow Book of Lecan copy. Italics and additions in round and square brackets are as found in the published text. **8** 'On the Bodleian fragment', 187. Italics and brackets as in the published text. **9** Stokes admitted: 'This article is, to me, unintelligible' ('On the Bodleian fragment', 204). **10** In medieval 'Isidorian' etymologies,

also to have some semantic connection to *quinque*, we are given no indication as to what a *rincne*, the subject of this entry, might be.

Fortunately, the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* is not isolated within the corpus of medieval Irish literature and extracts from other sources throw light upon what is intended here. We know Ferchess, for example, from various texts. His name seems to be understood as a compound of *fer* 'a man' and *ces* 'a spear', and, wherever this figure appears, violent action involving spears seems bound to ensue. Indeed, the verse-composition perhaps best recognized by its English title of 'The yew of the disputing sons' neatly summarizes what seems to be his literary *raison d'être*:

> Cid Ferchess ni dechas úad,
> ó rogab a arm d'imlúad,
> cér écht i ndegaid madma,
> can chrécht is can cha[thadb]a.[11]

> As for Ferchess, none escaped him when he had begun to ply his weapon, although it was a feat after victory, without inflicting a wound and the bruises of battle (?).[12]

Probably the best-known instance of Ferchess' use of a spear occurs in the opening sequence of the tale *Cath Maige Mucrama*.[13] Here, when called upon by Ailill Ólomm, Ferchess strikes the Otherworld king, Eogabul son of Durgabul, with a great spear (*di gaí mór*), breaking his back and killing him.

Accounts of Ferchess' own end are consistent also to the extent that most feature a spear. The version of his final moments in *Acallam na senórach* has a wealth of intriguing detail:

> 'Cáit ar' marbad Ferchis mac Comáin eices?' ar Cainén. 'Urchar', ar se, 'tuc Ael mac Derg-dhuib do bhir chruaidh chuilinn [dó] a mullach Sléibe Crott do dhamh allaid, gur' mharbh Feirchis de.'[14]

words are either derived from single lexical items or resolved into supposed original components which are phonetically, graphically and morphologically similar to the target and semantically suitable as an explanation for it. For some remarks on the principles involved see R. Baumgarten, 'A Hiberno-Isidorian etymology', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 225–8 at 226; idem, 'Placenames, etymology, and the structure of *fianaigecht*' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 1–24 at p. 2; idem, 'Creative medieval etymology and Irish hagiography (Lasair, Columba, Senán)', *Ériu*, 54 (2004), 49–78 at 49 and 58; Russell, 'The sounds of a silence', 16–27. **11** M. Dillon (ed. and trans.), 'The yew of the disputing sons', *Ériu*, 14 (1946), 154–65 at 157, §14. This composition is attributed to Cormac mac Cuilennáin (†908), with whom *Sanas Cormaic* is also associated: Dillon, 'The yew of the disputing sons', 154; Russell, 'The sounds of a silence', 10. **12** Dillon, 'The yew of the disputing sons', 162, §14. **13** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 38, §§3 and 4. **14** W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na Senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438 at ll. 1154–7.

> 'Where was Ferchess son of Commán Éices killed?' said Caínén. 'Áel son of Dergdub cast a hard spear of holly-wood from the top of Slíab Crott at a deer and he killed Ferchess as a result,' he [Caílte] said.[15]

According to the earlier *Scéla Moshauluim*, Finn killed Ferchess, having tracked him down by means of wood-shavings which Ferchess loosed upon the waters of the River Bann;[16] it is suggested elsewhere that these shavings came from the latter's spearshaft.[17] Although it is impossible to be certain, in view of what we know about events surrounding Ferchess, it seems likely that the verb *gonaid* in the long poem beginning 'Fianna batar i nEmain' is to be taken in its primary sense of 'pierces' rather than in the more general meaning 'kills':[18] 'is de ro gáet issin tres | Ferches macc Commain eices'[19] ('that is why Ferchess son of Commán Éices was pierced in the battle').

Ferchess, then, is a man who spears and is speared. Curiously, the prose text of *Acallam na senórach* moves from a note on how Sadb died of grief for Mac Con to the above-quoted remarks on the death of Ferchess but does not propose any link between the two.[20] Other texts confirm the tradition expressed in *Sanas Cormaic* that Ferchess killed Mac Con. The pseudo-historical text, *Ríg Érenn*, states that Mac Con was king for thirty years 'co torchair la Ferchess mac Commāin ēcis'[21] ('until he fell at the hands of Ferchess son of Commán Éices'). Essentially the same information is entered under the year 225 in the Annals of the Four Masters, but there the character at the centre of the discussion is named (as in *Sanas Cormaic*) 'Lughaidh mac MaicNiaidh' and this is glossed '.i. Mac Con'.[22] A couplet in the aforementioned 'Fianna batar i nEmain' also tells us 'Do laim Ḟerches ciarbo chol | dorochair Lugaid Macc con'[23] ('By the hand of Ferchess, although it was a sin, Lugaid Mac Con fell').

15 Translations offered throughout this essay are my own unless otherwise stated. For an alternative translation of the extract from *AS* see A. Dooley & H. Roe (trans.), *Tales of the elders of Ireland* (1999), p. 36. **16** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 84, §15. A gloss in the copy of 'Fianna batar i nEmain' in London, British Library, MS Egerton 1782 also records that Ferchess fell at the hands of Finn: W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'On the deaths of some Irish heroes', *Revue celtique*, 23 (1902), 303–48 at 328, §26. **17** M. Dillon (ed. and trans.), 'The death of Mac Con', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, 60 (1945), 340–5 at 341, §3. Cf. O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 60, §73. **18** See *DIL*, G 135.42–3. **19** Stokes, 'On the deaths', 310, §24 (cf. 321, §24, and 328, §26). **20** On the death of Sadb see Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1151–4. The following poem in *AS* has: 'Marbh Sadb do chumaid Meic con . ro gaet Ferchis d'aenurchor' (ibid., l. 1183). Dooley and Roe translated this as 'Sadb died grieving her son, Mac Con, slain by Ferchis' cast': *Tales of the elders*, p. 37. In keeping with the preceding prose, however, I would suggest that the second line in this couplet is independent (i.e., 'Sadb died of grief for Mac Con. Ferchess was pierced by a single cast'). **21** M.A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (1962), p. 121 (Rawl. B. 502, 136b5). **22** J. O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, 7 vols (1848–51), i, p. 110. **23** Stokes, 'On the deaths', 310, §24 (cf. 321, §24, and 328, §26). See also K. Meyer

Among the sources which offer more than a bare outline, there is some disagreement on how events leading to the spearing of Mac Con played out. *Cath Maige Mucrama* has the following:[24] Ailill Ólomm, having first sunk his tooth, the *fiacail fidba*,[25] into Mac Con's cheek, dispatched Ferchess in pursuit. Mac Con fled to his own country where, back against a pillar-stone, he implored his army to keep Ferchess away from him. Mac Con's army formed a barrier of shields between Ferchess and his target, but Ferchess launched his spear over them and it pierced Mac Con's forehead. *Aided Meic Con* tells much the same story but omits any reference to the circle of shields and so Ferchess' feat is considerably less impressive in this telling.[26] Geoffrey Keating, in his seventeenth-century *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, gives a similar report but adds that Mac Con was slain at the instigation of Cormac mac Airt.[27]

Whatever the departures apparent in the story as found in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, *Aided Meic Con* and *Foras feasa*, clearly, these constitute a single branch of the death of Mac Con. Against them stands the *fianaigecht* branch as represented by the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* and by material found in *Scéla Moshauluim*. In *Scéla Moshauluim*, Ailill sends Ferchess in pursuit of Mac Con. As he catches up in Ráith Úa nEchach, Finn divines his presence by means of the incantatory ritual known as *imbas forosnai*. The remainder of the passage contains some obscurities; from what can be confidently established, Ferchess chants over a spear[28] in words which, in the only extant manuscript witness, begin *rince marince* and the spear ends up through Mac Con who is still in his chariot. The episode from *Scéla Moshauluim*, as edited and translated by O Daly, runs as follows:

> Etha ó Hailill co Ferchess mac Commáin, Nad Seches forainm dó, co Bregon, senfhénnith 7 senfher teglaig do Ailill. Foídis didiu Ferches hi

(ed.), 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Senchān Torpēist cecinit so sīs', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 12 (1918), 378–9 at 379, §13. **24** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 60, §§70–2. **25** O Daly (ibid., pp 61, §70, and 83, §12) and Meyer (*Fianaigecht*, p. 37) translated this phrase as 'poisonous/venomous tooth'. Presumably, both were influenced by the glossing of *co fiacail fidbi* by *.i. nemi* ('i.e., poisonous') in Dillon, 'The death of Mac Con', 341, §2 (see also S.J. Arbuthnot (ed. and trans.), *Cóir anmann*, ii (2007), p. 13, §42). This explanation may well be an inference, however, and the word in question may be *DIL* 2 *fidba* which seems to refer to some kind of malefic spell or sorcery (cf. Dillon, 'The death of Mac Con', 343, n. 13a; Arbuthnot, *Cóir anmann*, ii, p. 161, note to §42). **26** Dillon, 'The death of Mac Con', 341, §§2 and 3. **27** P.S. Dinneen (ed. and trans.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, ii (1905), ll. 4458–71. The *Foras feasa* narrative is also embellished with a good deal of place-name matter which is not paralleled elsewhere, as far as I am aware; most notable is an etymological thread which claims that Mac Con was speared at Gort an Óir [< *ór* 'gold'], while he was dispensing gold and silver to the poets. **28** For another instance of chanting over a spear see the *dinnshenchas* of Cenn Cuirrig: 'do leic sleigh fua sgath, docachain bricht fora hind' ('throughout the shadow he hurled a spear, chanting a spell over it') (W. Stokes, 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue celtique*, 15 (1894), 418–84 at 442–4, §49).

> slicht immirge Maic Con d[o]a goin etira ṡlóg. To-tét all Chomut inna díaid con[d]a-tárraid hi rRáith Húa nEchach i n-óenach ríg Ráithlind. Is and-sain as-bert Find triasa n-imbas for-osnai: 'Fer i llurg', olse. 'Subaide óic fria lín', ol Mac Con. 'Fer i llurg', ol Find. 'Subaith cach n-óthath', ol Mac Con. In-lá Ferchess etir sen 7 se slig fora laim tarsa ṅglend an(d)air inna ndiaid síar 7 dí-cain forsin slig co n-érbart: 'Rince marince sech eris rohís ríg co ainm hitir da comainm'. Con luaster íar sein in gái dia láim Ferchess con luith tria Mac Con inna charpat cu fil a ailcha imbi cossindiu.[29]
>
> Ailill sent word to Bregon to Ferchess son of Commán – Nad Seches was his nickname – a veteran warrior and an old household retainer of Ailill's. Then he sent Ferchess on the track of Mac Con's migratory force to slay him in the midst of his host. He comes past Comat after it and overtook it in Ráith Úa nEchach on the king of Raithlend's fair-green. It was then Find said through the *imbas for-osnai*: 'A man in pursuit', said he. 'Warriors would be glad [to fight] against a number', said Mac Con. 'A man in pursuit', said Find. 'Any small number is easily slain', said Mac Con. Ferchess lays an ambush(?) with his spear in his hand (*or* beside him) [facing] across the glen from the east westwards after them and he chants a spell over the spear and said: 'Rinc[n]e marinc[n]e past [his] follower set upon [the] blemished king between two namesakes'. Thereupon Ferchess launched the spear from his hand and it pierced Mac Con in his chariot and to this day his memorial stone is in the place where he was slain.[30]

In the notes to her edition of *Scéla Moshauluim*, O Daly suggested that the above narrative was 'nearer to the original' than what is preserved in *Sanas Cormaic* and that the glossary entry 'reads rather like a rationalization' of the account of Mac Con's death in *Scéla Moshauluim*.[31] That there is a relationship between the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* and the Ferchess/Mac Con material in *Scéla Moshauluim* is readily apparent: in addition to the fact that Finn makes an appearance in both, both contain a portion of direct speech introduced with the words *rince marince* (*Scéla Moshauluim*)/*rincne quasi carincne* (*Sanas Cormaic*) and the reference to Ferchess as 'Ferchess mac Mosecis' in the glossary is almost certainly connected in some way to the statement 'Nad Seches forainm dó' ('Nad Seches was his nickname') in *Scéla Moshauluim*.[32]

29 O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 84, §14; cf. Meyer, *Fianiagecht*, p. 38. **30** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 85, §14; cf. Meyer, *Fianiagecht*, p. 39. Italics and additions in round and square brackets here are as found in the published text. **31** *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 142, note to l. 674. **32** The form *seches* is attested as 3rd sg. pres. indic. (relative) of the verb *seichithir* 'follows, pursues' (see *DIL*, S 144.15). Presumably, then, the name Nad Seches is intended

In other aspects, the two *fianaigecht* versions of Mac Con's end do not tally so well. Most notably, in the *Sanas Cormaic* version of events, Finn does not divine the presence of a single warrior on the track of Mac Con through *imbas forosnai* but instead counts Mac Con's forces in groups of five. Clearly, this discrepancy is bound up with a general fixation on the number five in the *Sanas Cormaic* entry. It is not immediately obvious how the tale, as told in *Scéla Moshauluim*, would fit the purposes of the glossary, in which the anecdotal matter has to link into the etymology implied in the opening gambit of 'rincne quasi quinque'. In *Sanas Cormaic*, the number-etymology and the reference to counting link together to produce a reasonably satisfying aetiological whole:

> Rincne quasi quinque. Unde dicitur: Ferchess mac Mosecis dixit intan bōi Find ūa Baiscni oc āirim cach cōicir ar n-ūair do slūag Luigdech maic Macniadh.
>
> *Rincne* as if *quinque* 'five'. Thus is said: Ferchess son of Moshéices (?) said [it] when Finn úa Baíscne was counting every five people in turn of the host of Lugaid mac Macniad.

Sanas Cormaic implies a semantic connection with the number five, then, but even here *rincne* is not explicitly assigned a meaning nor is it employed in a context that would render its meaning unambiguous. In *Scéla Moshauluim*, the word is actually *rince*, which is otherwise attested only in late sources as a term for 'dancing' or 'a dance'.[33] For insight into what *rincne/rince* means when employed in the texts under discussion and for some indication as to the form most likely to be correct, again we have to look elsewhere.

The account of the spearing of Mac Con in *Foras feasa*, though lacking Finn, includes the line 'do mharbh Mac Con leis an nga da ngairthí ringcne'[34] ('he killed Mac Con with the spear which was called *ringcne*'). The Annals of Tigernach specify that, in the battle of Cenn Abrat, Mac Con was lamed 'don rindcne .i. do sleigh Aililla'[35] ('by the *rindcne*, i.e., by Ailill's spear'). A similar term is employed in the Irish Grammatical Tract on Declension in the example 'arm rinngér mar an rinncni'[36] ('a sharp-pointed weapon like the *rinncne*'). So too, among the additional entries tacked onto the end of letter-block R in the long recension only of *Sanas Cormaic*, we find the explanatory gloss 'rincne

as an etymological nod in direction of phrases such as *hi slicht*, *inna díaid* and *i llurg*, all of which occur in *Scéla Moshauluim* to describe Ferchess' pursuit of Mac Con (O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 84, ll. 670, 671 and 673). I wonder if the name found in *Sanas Cormaic* (properly Moshéices?) might have been formed from the epithet of Commán Éices on analogy with Moshaulum. **33** *DIL*, s.v. *rin(n)ce*. **34** Dinneen, *Foras feasa*, ii, l. 4459. **35** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Annals of Tigernach: second fragment', *Revue celtique*, 17 (1896), 6–33 at 11. **36** O. Bergin, 'Irish grammatical tracts', *Ériu*, 8 (1916), Supplement, 1–60 at 40, l. 30. Cf. L. McKenna (ed.), *Dioghluim dána* (1938) p. 198, §28.

.i. ainm sleige'[37] ('*rincne*, i.e., a term/name for a spear'). Mícheál Ó Chléirigh's seventeenth-century glossary has 'rincni .i. sleagh … ar ar rincnib .i. ar ar sleaghaibh'[38] ('*rincne*, i.e., a spear … *ar ar rincnib*, i.e. on our spears'). In his notes on the Bodleian fragment of *Sanas Cormaic*, Stokes cited 'do rindcne .i. do sleigh' from London, British Library, MS Rawlinson B 488, fo. 4b2.[39]

All of these attestations suggest that the *-cne* of *Sanas Cormaic* is superior to the *-ce* of *Scéla Moshauluim*, and so we can probably assume that the form *rince* is owing to scribal omission of an *n*-stroke.[40] All excerpts cited in the previous paragraph also provide scope for the interpretation of *rincne* as a common noun and, indeed, editors of the texts under discussion have generally opted for lower-case initial. In keeping with this, the word is presented as a noun in a number of lexicographical sources. *DIL*, s.v. 1 *rincne*, describes *rincne* as a poetical word for a spear. Edward O'Reilly's dictionary has listings for *rincne* 'a lance, a spear' and *rincne* 'the number five' (which strongly suggests that *Sanas Cormaic* was one of the sources drawn upon).[41] Patrick Dinneen's *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* lists *rinncne* as a collective noun meaning 'points, spears'.[42] Joseph Vendryes defines *rincne* as 'sorte d'arme'.[43]

In contrast to all of this, O Daly regarded the word as a proper name, confined in usage to the spear of Ailill Ólomm.[44] She wondered if its origins might lie in *rinn* 'a point' + *gné* 'kind, species'.[45] Variants such as *rindcne/rinncni* in the Book of Uí Maine copy of *Sanas Cormaic*, in the Annals of Tigernach and in the Irish Grammatical Tract on Declension suggest that certain premodern scholars also were moved to identify *rinn* 'a point' in the first element. Apparently, Dinneen too thought of the word in question as a cognate of *rinn*, for he listed the term as *rinncne*. Vendryes suggested 'peut-être à rapprocher de *rind*'.[46] In a note on the *Sanas Cormaic* entry, Stokes suggested that *rincne* was a diminutive of *rinn*.[47] There is, however, a word *rincne*, which the editors of *DIL*, s.v. 3 *rincne*, tentatively defined as 'a kitten', citing as the only evidence 'rincne is eisside cat mac' from O'Davoren's glossary.[48] As Kevin Murray has recently shown, *cat mac* in the O'Davoren entry is most likely a genitive construction meaning 'a children's cat',[49] not (as the editors of *DIL* seem to have assumed in suggesting

37 Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §1127. **38** A.W.K. Miller, 'O'Clery's Irish glossary', *Revue celtique*, 5 (1881–3), 1–69 at 36. **39** 'On the Bodleian fragment', 204. **40** This seems to have been the conclusion reached by O Daly who offered, in her translation, the forms *rinc[n]e marinc[n]e*. See also 'rince marince [*leg.* rincne mo rincne?]' at *DIL*, R 71.23. **41** *An Irish-English dictionary* (1921), s.vv. **42** *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (1927), s.v. This entry is absent from the 1904 edition. **43** J. Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'Irlandais ancien R S* (1974), R–31. **44** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 15, n. 3. **45** Ibid. **46** *Lexique étymologique*, R-31. **47** O'Donovan & Stokes, *Sanas Chormaic*, p. 142. Cf. Miller, 'O'Clery's Irish glossary', 36. **48** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'O'Davoren's glossary' in W. Stokes & K. Meyer (eds), *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie*, 3 vols (1900–7), ii, pp 197–504 at §1365. **49** '*Catśleachta* and other medieval legal material relating to cats', *Celtica*, 25 (2007), 143–59 at 149.

the definition 'kitten') a compound of *catt* 'a cat' + *mac(c)*, which can refer to the young of animals.[50] Murray's edition and translation of the O'Davoren entry are given below:

> Rincne .i. cat, ut est rincne is ēisside cat mac .i. īarsind-í rīachus na macaīme becca, nō rīagait na macaīm ēissimh.
>
> *Rincne*, i.e. a cat, *ut est* a *rincne* is a children's cat, i.e. for the reason that it torments the small children, or the children torment it.[51]

A *rincne*, then, is a cat which torments or is tormented (though, the latter explanation gives the impression of an after-thought and is possibly an accretion). There seems to be some etymological content to the O'Davoren ruminations on *rincne*; Murray noted the existence of a verb *ringid* 'tears, mangles', from which the headword may be derived implicitly here.[52] Occurrences of the form *ringcne/ringcni* in Keating's *Foras feasa* and in two of the surviving copies of *Sanas Cormaic* suggest also that scholars not inclined towards *rinn* 'a point' perceived *ring* < *ringid* in the first element of *rincne*, the spear. So, might *rincne* refer primarily to some kind of cat? Parallel formations such as *baircne*, *breo(in)ne*, *cruibne* and *meoinne*,[53] all of which occur in legal and other learned contexts as words for types of cat,[54] suggest that this may well be the case. Interestingly, *Sanas Cormaic* has an entry explaining *baircne* as *cat ban* (sic leg.)[55] ('a cat for women'), which suggests that someone involved in the compilation of this text (or of one of its feeder-texts)[56] had access to a text on cat-terminology. It seems possible, then, that the initial part of the *Sanas Cormaic* item on *rincne* has its origins in an attempt to etmologize a word for a vicious cat through the Latin for the number of its claws. That is to say, in its original context, 'rincne quasi quinque' might have been intended to mean '*rincne* "a cat", as if *quinque* "five"'.

The relevance of all of this to the spear which killed Mac Con becomes clear when we consider the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* in conjunction with extracts from two other texts. One is a narrative contained in *Cóir anmann*. In an intriguing episode that owes much to the introductory section of *Cath Maige Mucrama*, *Cóir anmann* relates how Áine, daughter of Eogabul from the Otherworld, stripped Ailill Ólomm's ear and thereafter Ailill 'gabhais a t̓śleigh

50 *DIL*, M 6.42. **51** '*Cat̓slechta*', 149. **52** Ibid. **53** I follow the spellings given in *DIL*. **54** See *DIL*, svv. *baircne*, *breo(in)ne*, *cruibne* and *meoinne*; Murray, '*Cat̓slechta*', especially 144–9. **55** Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §115. For this and comparable material in other texts see F. Kelly, *Early Irish farming* (1997), p. 122, n. 142; Murray, '*Cat̓slechta*', 147–8. **56** On the compilation of glossaries see K. Meyer, 'The sources of some Middle-Irish glossaries' in Stokes & Meyer, *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie*, iii, pp 138–44; W. Mahon, 'Contributions to the study of early Irish lexicography' (1987), pp 1–59; P. Russell,'"Read it in a glossary": glossaries and learned discourse in medieval Ireland' (2008).

cóigrinn chuigi 7 saidhis triasan ingin gu talmain gurus bean in cóicedh rinn dí a cloich gurba cam dé'[57] ('took up his five-pointed spear and thrust through the girl to the ground so that he struck one of its five points into a stone and it was bent as a result'). The passage goes on to recount how Ailill put the bent spear-point under a tooth to straighten it, causing poison from the spear to enter the tooth and giving rise to the *fiacail fidba* (with which he later bites Mac Con in the cheek).[58]

The other extract of interest at this stage is *Do fhlathiusaib hÉrend*.[59] This is important in suggesting that Ailill Ólomm's five-pointed spear was that used by Ferchess to kill Mac Con. Having rehearsed the now-familiar theme that Mac Con was king for thirty years, the Book of Leinster text of *Do fhlathiusaib hÉrend* continues 'co torchair don goth Néit iar tain la Ferches mac Commain'.[60] The editors of the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster elected to give *Néit* here a capital initial, as did O Daly in her citation of the extract, which she accompanied with remarks on the war-god Néit and a reference to the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on this name.[61] Presumably, then, O Daly and those responsible for the Book of Leinster transcription took the extract in question to mean 'until afterwards he fell by "Néit's spear" at the hands of Ferchess son of Commán'. A similar phrase appears in Recension 1 of *Táin bó Cúailgne*: 'ro gabastar a ocht ngothnatha 'má goth néit'.[62] Interestingly, at the same point in the text, the Book of Leinster copy of *Táin bó Cúailgne* has *ṅdét*, nasalized genitive plural of *dét* 'a tooth': 'ro gabastar a ocht [n]gothnata 'ma gothnait ṅdét'.[63] Alert to the Book of Leinster reading,[64] Cecile O'Rahilly wisely translated the corresponding line in Recension 1 as 'he took his eight little javelins with his ivory-handled javelin',[65] understanding *néit* as a pronounciation spelling of *ndéit*, literally 'of a tooth' (> 'of ivory'). In alluding to the spear with which Ferchess killed

57 Arbuthnot, *Cóir anmann*, ii, §42. **58** Although a full telling of the origins of Ailill Ólomm's *fiacail fidba* is confined to *Cóir anmann*, there are grounds for thinking that the tale had wider currency amongst the literary community of medieval Ireland. 'The yew of the disputing sons', for example, attests to Áine's angering of Ailill and his subsequent spearing of her: 'Ra fergaiged Ailill de, | ra ṡáid a ṡleig i nÁne' (Dillon, 'The yew of the disputing sons', 157, §13). **59** I give the title here as it appears in the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster (see below, n. 60), but this is essentially the same pseudo-historical text as was referred to earlier as *Ríg Érenn* in keeping with the heading adopted in O'Brien's *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (see above, n. 21). **60** R.I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (1954–83), i, ll. 2967–8. Cf. R.A.S. Macalister (ed. and trans.), *Lebor gabála Érenn*, 5 vols (1938–56), v, p. 336, §600. Macalister offered *don gothneit* and translated 'by the dart', clearly taking the word in question to be a form of *gothnat* 'a small javelin, a dart'. **61** *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 16. The *Sanas Cormaic* entry in question can be found in Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §965. **62** C. O'Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin bó Cúailnge: Recension 1* (1976), ll. 2231–2. **63** C. O'Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (1967), ll. 2247–8. **64** O'Rahilly gives the variant from the Book of Leinster in *Táin bó Cúailnge: Recension 1*, p. 68, n. 6. **65** O'Rahilly, *Táin bó Cúailnge: Recension 1*, p. 186.

Mac Con as *(don) goth néit* (lowering the *n*-), it seems to me that *Do fhlathiusaib hÉrend* has probably also given us a phonetic rendering of *goth ndéit*.[66] While this could be taken to mean 'the ivory-hilted spear', I am inclined to think that a word-play is involved here and that the phrase can be interpreted literally as 'the spear of the tooth', that is, the spear which was put under Ailill Ólomm's tooth, the spear that gave rise to the *fiacail fidba*.

Cóir anmann, then, records that Ailill Ólomm had a five-pointed spear and that, on one auspicious occasion, he put one of the points under a tooth to straighten it. Informed reading of *Do fhlathiusaib hÉrend* suggests that the spear with which Ferchess killed Mac Con had something to do with a tooth. Other sources mention that Ailill's spear was called *rindcne* (Annals of Tigernach) and that Ferchess used the *ringcne* to kill Mac Con (*Foras feasa*). Putting all of this together, we might deduce that (a) Mac Con was killed by Ferchess, using Ailill Ólomm's spear, the *rincne*, (b) this spear had five points, (c) *rincne* (properly Rincne?) was given as a name to Ailill's spear because its five points resembled the five claws of the vicious cat denoted by that term,[67] and (d) whatever about the original intent, 'rincne quasi quinque' in *Sanas Cormaic* can be read as '*rincne* "a five-pointed spear", as if *quinque* "five"'.

Assuming that I am correct in what I suggest, it is likely that at least some of this was lost sight of by the time the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* was being constructed. I see the development of the entry along these lines: 'rincne quasi quinque' was probably originally a separate item, perhaps applying to a cat. Some medieval scholar sought to augment this brief item by referencing the direct speech beginning *rinc[n]e* which survives, attributed to Ferchess, in the *Scéla Moshauluim* version of the death of Mac Con.[68] It seems, however, that the compiler of the inflated entry did not know that *rincne* was a five-pointed spear and, to align the anecdote with the etymology through *quinque*, he introduced the idea of Finn counting in groups of five.[69] Indeed, those involved in

66 It is probably necessary to assume that the phrase is petrified here and was taken into this text from a different context because after *don* we would not expect noun + nasalized qualifying genitive (unless this is a case of the Middle-Irish use of accusative for dative). **67** Again, I take only the first of O'Donovan's suggestions on the meaning of *rincne*, the cat. **68** In medieval Irish glossaries, it is not uncommon to find instances where explanatory or etymological glosses and extracts from literary or legal texts, intended to illustrate a use in context of the word under consideration, have been brought together. Usually, the gloss neatly dovetails into the citation, but sometimes it seems that the only connection between the gloss at the head of an entry and the accompanying citation is a surface-similarity in form. Thus, in the *Sanas Cormaic* entry beginning *bille .i. genaige* ('*bille*, i.e., a laughing-stock'), the phrase *dā n-ó bill* is offered in support of this meaning for the headword (Meyer, *Sanas Cormaic*, §179); as I have sought to show elsewhere, however, *bill* in this phrase is a pronounciation spelling of nasalized *pill* < *pell* 'a horse': S.J. Arbuthnot, 'Only fools and horses: *dá n-ó pill* and *dá n-ó bill* in medieval Irish literature'. **69** In contrast, Karen Burgess, knowing that *rincne* was a spear, tried to make sense of the *Sanas Cormaic* entry by suggesting that

the transmission of the glossary material came to think that it was Finn who uttered the speech beginning 'rincne quasi quinque'.

To look at the evidence for the last statement: in *Scéla Moshauluim*, it is clear that the speech beginning *rinc[n]e marinc[n]e* is spoken by Ferchess. O Daly's edition and tentative translation run:

> In-lá Ferchess etir sen 7 se slig fora laim … 7 dí-cain forsin slig co n-érbart: 'Rince marince …'.
>
> Ferchess lays an ambush (?) with his spear in his hand (*or* beside him) … he chants a spell over the spear and said: 'Rinc[n]e marinc[n]e …'.

Initially, Ferchess is presented as the speaker in *Sanas Cormaic* also. The lead-in to the narrative part of the glossary entry reads: 'Rincne … Ferchess mac Mosecis dixit in tan bōi Find ūa Baiscni oc āirim' ('*rincne* … Ferchess son of Moshéices (?) said [it] while Finn úa Baíscne was counting'). Ferchess is also the subject of each of the four verbal forms which precede the direct speech:

> Adacht Ferchess … 7 dollēicci in slig … conidromarb 7 asbert occa rincne quasi carincne.
>
> Ferchess went … and he casts the spear … so that he killed [him] and he said on that occasion: '*rincne* as if *carincne*'.

After the direct speech, however, the glossary matter continues '.i. ar ba heth atbeired Find bēus ō'trīmed cach cōicer a ūair' ('i.e., for that is what Finn used to say also when he counted every five people in turn'). This looks like an accretion to the text, supplied by a scholar who was unclear as to how the speech was relevant to the killer of Mac Con but (based on the initial etymology) saw how it might fit with Finn who counted in fives. Furthermore, there is evidence that, over time, the fragment of direct speech was modified to correspond better to the etymology suggested at the start of the glossary entry. As can be seen from the apparatus attached to the *Sanas Cormaic* entry at the start of this essay, the *quasi* which appears between *rincne* and *carincne* is not found in the manuscripts of the shorter, earlier recension; in all likelihood, this was introduced in the longer, later recension under the influence of initial 'rincne quasi quinque'.[70]

this spear belonged to Finn and ignoring the counting: 'Furbaide's tooth', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 15 (1995), 42–55 at 47 and n. 41. **70** One wonders even whether the initial element of *carincne* might have arisen when *q* was misread as *c* followed by the *ar*-compendium. Thus, at some stage in the manuscript transmission, the reading at this point might have been *quincne* or similar. My thanks to Dr Paul Russell for this suggestion.

There is one other indication that those responsible for the final version of the *Sanas Cormaic* entry were moving away from the view that the speech beginning with *rincne* was spoken by Ferchess. In *Sanas Cormaic*, the action of Ferchess in relation to the spear is described as follows: 'dollēici in slig for Lugaid' ('he casts the spear at Lugaid'). Similar constructions, involving the verb *do-léci* 'throws, casts, hurls', are found in the account of Mac Con's death in *Cath Maige Mucrama* ('dos-léici chuce',[71] 'he casts it towards him') and in *Aided Meic Con* ('doteilc Ferchis urchar fair',[72] 'Ferchess made a cast at him'). In *Scéla Moshauluim*, the only source to refer explicitly to Ferchess' chanting,[73] the verb employed is *luïd* 'moves': 'con luaster íar sein in gaí dia láim Ferchess'.[74] As O Daly noted,[75] this verb can be used transitively or intransitively and the form in question in *Scéla Moshauluim* seems to have the 3 sg. preterite deponent ending. While O Daly preferred to take the line in question to mean 'thereupon Ferchess launched the spear from his hand',[76] Meyer opted for the intransitive use and gave 'the spear moved from the hand of Ferchess'.[77] Neither interpretation is entirely faithful to the text: Meyer was choosing to regard the form *Ferchess* in the text as genitive in function, while O Daly had to take *in gaí* as accusative, although the noun lacks obvious nasalization.

On balance, I think Meyer was probably on the right track. That objects could move by themselves or by the power of words alone is an idea that finds expression elsewhere in medieval Irish literature. One thinks, for example, of Morann's collar, which would tighten around the necks of those proclaiming false judgement,[78] and of various weapons which jump and cry out of their own accord or turn against their owners in response to unfounded verbal declarations.[79] It seems to me that Ferchess' chant causes the spear to move in *Scéla Moshauluim* and that the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* incorporates a construction with a transitive use of *do-léci* because 'rincne quasi carincne, riis rīg' had established itself in the minds of glossary-scribes as some kind of counting-formula spoken by Finn rather than as a chant addressed by Ferchess to ensure his spear finds its target.

What, then, about the feature which, among these narratives on the death of Mac Con, is truly unique to *Sanas Cormaic* – the counting? The etymology suggested at the start of the glossary entry may dictate that Finn count in groups

71 O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 60, §72. **72** Dillon, 'The death of Mac Con', 341, §3. **73** In addition to 'dí-cain forsin slig', it seems possible that 'in-lá Ferchess etir sen 7 se slig for a laim' has to do with chanting over a spear, for *in-lá* can mean 'enters into' (cf. *DIL*, I 271.85) and *sén* denotes 'an incantation, charm'. **74** O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 84, §14. **75** Ibid., p. 143, note to l. 676. **76** Ibid., p. 85, §14. **77** *Fianaigecht*, p. 39. **78** Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §1160; R. Thurneysen (ed. and trans.), 'Morands Fürstenspiegel', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 11 (1917), 56–106 at 65 and 68, n. 3. **79** Instances from *Serglige Con Culainn*, 'The death of Maelodrán mac Dimma Cróin', *Mesca Ulad* and *Togail bruidne Da Derga*, amongst others, are considered by J. Borsje, 'Omens, ordeals and oracles: on demons and weapons in early Irish texts', *Peritia*, 13 (1999), 224–48 at 225–31.

of five but that is not to suggest that Finn was not up to something more than routine enumeration. There are several literary episodes dealing with counting which may be relevant to Finn's activity in *Sanas Cormaic*. Of immediate interest is the pig-counting episode in *Cath Maige Mucrama*. Here, the etymology of Mucrama through *muc(c)* 'a pig' + *rím* 'act of counting' is supported by an anecdote that tells how a group of destructive pigs arrive out of Ireland's own Hell-mouth. These prove impossible to count by all except Ailill and Medb but depart once their total has been established.[80] Estimations of their number prior to the intervention of Ailill and Medb are three, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen. The fact that all are odd numbers is unlikely to be without significance; as Vincent Foster Hopper observed, 'odd numbers were universally considered more godlike, more perfect, and (in magic) more powerful than the even'.[81]

The number five, in multiples of which Finn counts Mac Con's host, is notable by its absence from the pig-counting in *Cath Maige Mucrama*. It is also an odd number and, moreover, a circular or automorphic number, which is to say, it reproduces itself when raised to its powers.[82] This probably goes some way to explaining why, in Irish literary texts, spears are often depicted as having five points[83] and why bands of five fighting-men are a common feature in *fianaigecht* literature in particular.[84] On the impact of the pig-counting in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh commented: 'it was vital that the people should count the pigs, for then the pigs would lose their power'.[85] Jacqueline Borsje thought the episode could bear a more closely defined interpretation and proposed that Ailill and Medb 'are portrayed here in their sacral function of protecting the land, and counting is their method'.[86] Borsje brought that the pig-counting from *Cath Maige Mucrama* into a discussion of an episode from Muirchú's seventh-century Life of St Patrick in which an ill-intentioned king counts the saint and his followers who thereafter disappear from his sight, leaving only deer to represent their number.[87]

80 O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 48, §§34–7. Also Stokes, 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', 470, §70. **81** *Medieval number symbolism* (1938), p. 101. **82** Ibid., p. 102. **83** For some examples see E. Windisch (ed.), '*De chophur in dá muccida*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iii.1 (1891), pp 230–75 at p. 238, l. 106; R. Thurneysen (ed.), '*Táin bó Cúailghni* nach H.2.17', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 8 (1912), 525–54 at 550; O'Rahilly, *Táin bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ll. 2248 and 4472. **84** See, for example, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *The instructions of King Cormac mac Airt* (1909), p. 18, §8. **85** 'The theme of *lommrad* in *Cath Maige Mucrama*', *Éigse*, 18 (1980–1), 211–24 at 219–20. **86** 'Druids, deer and "words of power": coming to terms with evil in medieval Ireland' in K. Ritari & A. Bergholm (eds), *Approaches to religion and mythology in Celtic studies* (2008), pp 122–49 at p. 127. Cf. 'Supernatural threats to kings: exploration of a motif in the Ulster Cycle and in other medieval Irish tales' in R. Ó hUiginn & B. Ó Catháin (eds), *Ulidia, 2* (2009), pp 173–94 at pp 181–3. **87** L. Bieler (ed. and trans.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (1979), 90.

Finn's counting in the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* also seems intended to have some effect beyond what can be objectively demonstrated. The text states that Finn is acting 'do chuinchidh ind fēnnedo' ('to seek the warrior').[88] Of course, the whereabouts of Ferchess would be revealed if *slúag Luigdech* were to depart the scene or change into an innocuous form like the deer in Muirchú's Life. John Carey, however, took the view that the *Sanas Cormaic* article on *rincne* 'recounts yet another of Finn's divinatory exploits, linked in another source with *imbas forosnai*'.[89] Finn is more readily associated with divining than with banishing spells or transfiguration, but *Sanas Cormaic* itself is silent as to exactly how counting enabled Finn 'do chuinchidh ind fēnnedo', and it is probably safest to conclude simply that Finn seems to be engaged here in some kind of supernatural activity which, in the minds of certain glossary-scribes, was linked with an obscure verbal pronouncement.

This view – which assumes that the scholars at work on *Sanas Cormaic* were more inclined to associate the fragment of direct speech with Finn than with Ferchess – differs somewhat from how Nora Chadwick perceived the situation. Like Carey, Chadwick brought the *rincne*-entry into a discussion of *imbas forosnai*. She first cited Stokes' translation of the entry as found in Laud MS Misc. 610 and then went on to observe:

> It will be seen that the words *triasa n-imbas forosnai*, which are found in the version of the story referred to above [*Scéla Moshauluim*], are absent from this version; but it is interesting to note that the words which Stokes has not translated are *tren foachnamai*, (*cf.* '*Imbas forosnai*') … The reason why Stokes does not translate them is obvious: they do not stand in any syntactical relation to the sentence in which they occur. They are, in fact, a rubric or title of the charm recited by Ferchess over his spear before he casts it at Mac Con.[90]

Later in same article, Chadwick wrote: 'we have also seen Ferchess chanting *tren foachnami* over his spear before casting it at Lugaid'.[91] At no point did she give her understanding of this phrase; in light of the comparison she drew with *triasa n-imbas forosnai*, however, I assume that she took *tren* to represent the prepo-

88 Regarding the translation of *fēinnid* here, it may be noted that, in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, Ferchess is described as 'fáith side 7 fhénnid', which O Daly translates as 'he was a seer and a warrior': *Cath Maige Mucrama*, pp 38–9, §3. In *Scéla Moshauluim*, Ferchess is 'senfhénnith 7 senfher teglaig do Ailill' ('a veteran warrior and an old household retainer of Ailill's'); ibid., pp 84–5, §14. **89** 'The three things required of a poet', *Ériu*, 48 (1997), 41–58 at 48. **90** N.K. Chadwick, '*Imbas forosnai*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 4 (1935), 97–135 at 114. On p. 105, Chadwick gives her understanding of 'rubrics' as 'phrases extracted from texts of spells or of mantic processes; but it is clear that they have now come to serve in many cases, as titles of the spells themselves'. **91** Ibid., 120.

sition with the definite article[92] and that in *foachnamai* perhaps she perceived *fuach*, a poetic term for 'a word; a stanza or quatrain'.[93] No doubt, the fact that the phrase is used in conjunction with a form of the verb *ad-aig*, which can mean 'raises, puts forth (cry, shout)',[94] contributed to Chadwick's belief that the phrase in question had to do with a charm.

The phrase which interested Chadwick puzzled O Daly who deemed the line in question 'clearly intelligible except for *foa chnāmae*'.[95] It may be useful, therefore, to look at what is found at this point in the other manuscript witnesses to *Sanas Cormaic*. Stokes edited the relevant portion of the *Leabhar Breac* copy as 'atracht [Ferc]hes triana fuachtname [?] seoch Find'.[96] The verbal form here seems to be 3 sg. past indicative of *at-reig* 'rises (often also rises and goes, goes)'.[97] *DIL* has a listing for *? fuachtname*, but no meaning is suggested and there are no examples other than the present one from *Sanas Cormaic*. The dictionary editors suggested that the text may be corrupt. Rather than being a corruption, *fuachtname* seems to be an editorial misexpansion. The manuscript has *fuachtn–e*,[98] which Stokes tentatively expanded on analogy with the forms found in the other copies of *Sanas Cormaic*. The intended reading may be **fuachtnaige*, an (otherwise-unattested?) abstract from *fúachtnaigid* 'is aggressive or violent, makes an attack, injures'. The *Leabhar Breac* extract would then mean roughly 'Ferchess rose/went in aggression'. The Book of Uí Maine copy of *Sanas Cormaic* has *foacnairai*. Almost certainly, this variation also is owing to a misexpansion, presumably of underlying *foa cn—ai*[99] (although here the culprit is a medieval scribe rather than a modern editor).

Foachnamæ appears in full in all manuscripts of the long recension. In *DIL*, this phrase is quoted under *cnáim* 'bone',[1] and the editors indicate that the meaning is essentially that of an extract from the *Dinnshenchas*, which Edward Gwynn edited and translated as 'roreith-side fothúaidh íar nirt a cnámh' ('ran northward as fast as his legs could carry him').[2] Perhaps, then, the verb *ad-aig* in 'adacht … tren foa chnāmæ' can be taken in the sense 'goes, proceeds'[3] and 'tren foa chnāmæ', literally, 'strong under (or about) his bones', is an idiom which (like the variant in the *Leabhar Breac* copy of *Sanas Cormaic*) refers to vigorous action. Following this interpretation, we need not be troubled by Chadwick's claim that the words under discussion 'do not stand in any syntactical relation to the sentence in which they occur'; if we take 'adacht Ferchess tren foa chnāmæ sech Finn 7 dollēicci in slig for Lugaid' to mean roughly 'Ferchess went as fast as he could past Finn and he casts the spear at Lugaid', the syntax seems unobjectionable. Despite what Chadwick claims, then, I think it unlikely that *Sanas Cormaic* preserves evidence of a charm entitled *tren foachnamai*.

92 Dinneen, *Foclóir*, s.v. *tré*. **93** *DIL*, s.v. **94** *DIL*, s.v. *ad-aig* (f). **95** *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 142, note to l. 674. **96** *Three Irish glossaries*, p. 39. **97** *DIL*, s.v. **98** RIA MS 23 P 16, p. 271a (four lines from the bottom). **99** RIA MS D ii 1, fo. 125va5. **1** C 264.46–7. **2** *The metrical Dindshenchas*, 5 vols (1903–35), iv, pp 292–3. **3** *DIL*, *ad-aig* (i).

Having come this far, it seems possible to attempt a new translation of the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne*:

> *Rincne* as if *quinque* 'five'. Thus is said: Ferchess son of Moshéices (?) said [it] when Finn úa Baíscne was counting every five people in turn of the host of Lugaid mac Macniad, seeking the warrior, Ferchess. Ferchess went as fast as he could past Finn and he casts the spear at Lugaid so that he killed [him] and he said on that occasion: '*rincne quasi carincne*, *riis rig*', for that is what Finn used to say also when he counted every five people in turn. *Rincne* as if *quinque*.

I have deliberately refrained from trying to render the fragment of direct speech into English. Chants, charms and satires are often obscure either at the start only or in their entirety. Finn's first *imbas forosnai*, for example, forms part of the well-known 'Finn and the man in the tree', but Meyer deemed the portion of text in question 'untranslatable'.[4] In the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *gaire*, we are presented with a satiric verse which, in four short lines, is capable of raising blisters on the face, but the text itself was so murky, even to a medieval scholar, that every word of the first line had to be glossed.[5] R.I. Best published a charm against impotence recorded in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1336 (H.3.17), which includes the alliterative and seemingly nonsensical 'fidula fadula fidaili bibili belabili'.[6] Clearly, then, phonetic patterns play an important role in verbal pronouncements of this kind, and it is perhaps not necessary to assume that sense can be extracted from *rinc[n]e marinc[n]e* (*Scéla Moshauluim*) or *rincne carincne* (short recension of *Sanas Cormaic*), perhaps the pattern (*rincne* followed by x+*rincne*) is what is important.[7]

Can sense be extracted from the second part of the pronouncement? This reads *riis rig* in the manuscripts of the longer recension of *Sanas Cormaic* and *ris riig/rig* in the manuscripts of the shorter text. Following on from *rinc[n]e marinc[n]e*, *Scéla Moshauluim* has 'sech eris rohís ríg co ainm hitir da comainm'. Meyer made no attempt to translate this;[8] O Daly proposed 'set upon [the] blemished king' for 'rohís ríg co ainm', taking *rohís* to be 2 sg. present subjunctive of *ro-icc*.[9] By the time we reach *Sanas Cormaic*, all has been considerably curtailed. More importantly, there is some resemblance between what actually appears in *Sanas Cormaic* and entries in other glossary texts such as *ris*

4 'Finn and the man in the tree', *Revue celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9 at 347. See, subsequently, V. Hull, 'A rhetoric in "Finn and the man in the tree"', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 30 (1967), 17–20; J. Carey, 'Obscure styles in medieval Ireland,' *Mediaevalia*, 19 (1996), 23–39 at 26–7. **5** Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §698. **6** 'Some Irish charms', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 27–32 at 32. **7** *DIL*, s.v. *carincne*, gives only a cross-reference to 1 *rincne*. O Daly suggested that the first element of *marincne* might be the 1 sg. possessive pronoun (*Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 142, note to l. 676). **8** *Fianaigecht*, p. 39. **9** *Cath Maige Mucrama*, p. 142, note to l. 676.

.i. ri[10] and *ruis .i. ríg*.[11] Once we have encountered these glosses, it is difficult to escape the thought that they are in some way related to the *Sanas Cormaic* matter under discussion. That is to say, it seems likely either that these glosses arose from *riis rig* in *Sanas Cormaic* or, in the latter part of the *Sanas Cormaic* version of the *rincne*-speech, glossary matter of this kind was drawn upon to plug a gap in understanding.

To sum up: of the medieval Irish sources dealing with the death of Mac Con, the *Sanas Cormaic* entry on *rincne* is the least well known and understood. It opens and closes with an etymology of the word *rincne* through Latin *quinque* 'five' and the bulk of the material tells how Finn úa Baíscne counted the host of Mac Con (here named Lugaid mac Macniad) in groups of five while he was seeking a warrior named Ferchess, how this Ferchess killed Mac Con with a spear, and how Ferchess followed Finn in uttering a short but elusive statement beginning 'rincne quasi carincne'. It is difficult to make out from all of this what a *rincne* might be, why it might be fittingly etymologized through the number five and why the fragment of direct speech which at the heart of the matter is attributed to both Ferchess and Finn. On investigation of other sources, answers emerge.

Rincne, it seems, refers to a spear, specifically, Ailill Ólomm's five-pointed spear with which Ferchess killed Mac Con. It is also a term for an aggressive cat (presumably, with five well-honed claws), and it may be that Ailill's spear was named after this cat. Indeed, as *Sanas Cormaic* has at least one other entry on cat-terminology, it is possible that the etymological component of the *rincne*-entry was originally an independent item in which a term for a type of cat was derived from Latin *quinque*. In the entry as it stands, the etymological explanation is conflated with an account of the killing of Mac Con which is paralleled elsewhere. This passage incorporates a fragment of direct speech beginning with the word *rincne*. Whether the glossary scribes were aware that *rincne* in this speech originally referred to a spear is debateable; certainly, they were confused about how the term was associated with the number five, for the etymology through *quinque* is supported by reference not to the points of the spear but to Finn counting in fives. Finn's counting in *Sanas Cormaic* seems to be an innovation in the tradition of the death of Mac Con. Its inclusion probably explains why, in the glossary, the direct speech is attributed to Finn as well as to Ferchess – that is to say, a rationalizing scribe seems to have assumed that, as *rincne* has something to do with the number five, this speech must be said by the character who is counting. How the authors and transmitters of this material understood Finn's activity is not entirely clear, however. The purpose of the counting is to reveal the presence of Ferchess (an objective achieved in *Scéla Moshauluim* by means of *imbas forosnai*), and so we might suppose that

10 W. Stokes (ed.), 'The Lecan glossary' in Stokes & Meyer, *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie*, 3 vols (1900–7), i, pp 50–100 at p. 57, §294. **11** Ibid., p. 62, §86.

some kind of supernatural ritual is involved. Perhaps, a more precise understanding of the situation will be reached only after further work is carried out on instances of counting in medieval literature emanating from Ireland and on the concept of *búaid n-ardmesa* 'gift of estimating (esp. the numbers of an enemy)'.[12]

12 *DIL*, A 188.78–81. Cf. Ó Cathasaigh, 'The theme of *lommrad*', 220. Much of the research for this essay was undertaken in the course of the AHRC-funded Early Irish Glossaries Project (2006–9), based at the University of Cambridge. I would like to thank Dr Kaarina Hollo for her comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

Breaking the cycle? Accounts of the death of Finn

Geraldine Parsons

The circumstances of Finn mac Cumaill's death have not received the attention that has been paid to his other rites of passage.[1] There are multiple accounts of the death of Finn extant in the written literature of Middle and Early Modern Irish; versions were also in circulation in Irish and Scottish Gaelic in the modern era.[2] Thirty-one distinct statements on the death of Finn, contained in nineteen works, are known to me.[3] The bulk of these accounts belong to one of three traditions. The most widely attested tradition has Finn being killed by members of the Luigne. The second most popular version of events sees Finn die as he performs a leap, usually across a body of water. The third strand locates Finn's death at Aill in Bruic, in Luachair Dedad. The existence of a number of essentially distinct, if occasionally overlapping, traditions of death is not a phenomenon unique to Finn; for example, there appear to be three different accounts of the demise of Cormac mac Airt.[4] Commenting on this relatively complex tradition, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh stated: 'It is a pity that Cormac's death is shrouded in mystery, but this is in keeping with his heroic status'.[5]

Within the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*),[6] the death of Finn occupies a curious position. The fact of his demise is everywhere apparent,[7] but the actual event is not treated in any detail in the narrative as it survives.[8] There are only three brief allusions to how he died and the

1 A list of references to accounts of Finn's death is given in E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp xli–xlii. For discussion see D. Ó hÓgáin, *Fionn mac Cumhaill* (1988), pp 108–13. On other stages of Finn's life see J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985); idem, 'Fenian heroes and their rites of passage' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 161–82. **2** See Ó hÓgáin, *Fionn mac Cumhaill*, pp 279–81, on the literary background to folkloric accounts. **3** Details of these accounts are given in the Appendix. See n. 66 for discussion of the fact that one account (D22) may refer to the death of another character called Finn. **4** See T. Ó Cathasaigh, *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt* (1977), pp 68–72. **5** Ibid., p. 71. **6** See, most recently, A. Dooley, 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 97–126, for a dating of the text to the early thirteenth century. **7** See, for example, W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438 at ll. 17 and 319–28. **8** This analysis of *AS* is hampered by the fact that each of the tale's five manuscript witnesses ends at a different point and none of these end-points has been taken as the tale's conclusion: G. Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 55 (2008), 11–39 at 12.

information is always communicated at the end of a narrative episode and is incidental to that episode's main thrust. This near-silence is intriguing. Great interest is taken throughout the tale in how other characters from Finn's era died and, as will be explored in greater detail below, the *AS* narrative can be seen as deliberately comprehensive concerning the lore of Finn and the *fían*. Therefore, it is remarkable that no question is ever posed in *AS* concerning the manner of Finn's demise and that such detail as the text contains on that subject is minimal. This essay will contextualize the treatment of the death of Finn in *AS* with regard to other literary accounts and will ask if the subject is consciously shrouded in mystery in the former text. As well as addressing these points, a larger issue will be broached, namely, how *fíanaigecht* material can be said to partake of a corporate – or cyclic – identity and how such an identity was subject to change over time.

Acallam na senórach *and the Finn Cycle*

Underlying this essay is the idea that it is appropriate and useful to think of the literature connected with Finn as constituting a cycle. The understanding of the concept of the literary cycle adopted here is derived from Erich Poppe's detailed definition, with the following points being central:

> 1. cyclic identity depends on the ability of audiences – medieval or modern – to make connections between texts because these depict the same world;
> 2. to qualify as part of a cycle, a text must cohere with at least one other text, for example, in terms of its setting at a particular time, overlap of narrative personnel and a shared geographical focus;
> 3. a further 'ideal' defining element in a literary cycle is the presence of 'common, fixed points of reference'.[9]

What is meant by a common fixed point of reference can be easily illustrated with reference to the Ulster Cycle. *Táin bó Cúailnge* assumes the role of the central tale of that cycle not merely because of its ambitious scale, but also because the fact of the cattle-raid described therein drives the narrative of a significant proportion of the other tales of the Ulaid, such as the *remscéla*[10] and *Cath Ruis na Ríg*.[11] Such tales are presented as explaining the cause of the cattle-raid or recounting other events which the cattle-raid set in motion; their relationship to *Táin bó Cúailnge* anchors them in a tradition which exceeds their own narrative parameters.

9 *Of cycles and other critical matters* (2008), pp 10–11. The 'common, fixed points of reference' pertain to an 'immanent cycle' (pp 13–14) which contrasts with a 'cycle by transmission' (p. 14). **10** N. Backhaus, 'The structure of the list of *remscéla Tána bó Cualngi* in the Book of Leinster', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 19 (1990), 19–26. **11** E. Hogan (ed. and trans.),

AS is positioned as the central text of the Finn Cycle in two ways. Its question-and-answer format allowed the author to provide a full description of the function and make-up of the *fían*.[12] The author's deliberate communication of such information is nowhere as clear as in the passage containing the poem 'Raid a Chailti'.[13] This poem lists every leader of the *fían* and describes the ideological underpinnings of the institution, which are contrasted with those of Ireland's royal class, particularly in terms of their attitudes to Ireland's natural resources. Were there to be any doubt as to the importance of the information conveyed in this poem, it would soon be dispelled by the passage that follows it immediately. A praise-formula that occurs after a number of Caílte's tales is found here in its most elaborate form, with particular emphasis laid on the importance of preserving the information just communicated:

> 'Adrae buaid 7 bennachtain, a Chailti,' ar Diarmait mac Cerbaill, '7 caid a filet sin 7 senchaide Eirenn? Scribthar i tamlorgaib filed 7 a slechtaib suad 7 a mbriathraib ollaman … co mbere cach a chuid lais da crich 7 da ferann bodein da cach ní dar' indis Cailti 7 Oissin da morgnimarthaib gaile 7 gaiscid, 7 do dindsenchus Eirenn.' Ocus dogníd amlaid sin.[14]
>
> 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Díarmait son of Cerball, 'and where are Ireland's elders and keepers of *senchas*? Let everything that Caílte and Oisín have related concerning their great deeds of valour and of prowess and concerning the place-name lore of Ireland be written on the tablets of poets, in the recensions of scholars and in the words of *ollomain*, so that each might carry his share with him to his own district and land.' It was done in that way.

As well as forging the orthodoxy of *fianaigecht* narrative, as *Táin bó Cúailnge* does for the Ulster material, *AS* provides a fixed, common point of reference for its cycle. This fixed point, which is the second way in which the text is presented as the central text of the Finn Cycle, is the encounter of the *fían* with the Christian faith. *AS* is the first large-scale 'writing up' of this theme; the text developed a topos found in some twelfth-century poetry[15] and established a pattern that is replicated, albeit with tonal shifts, by texts such as the *Acallam bec* (*AB*),[16] *Agallamh na seanórach* (*AS* II),[17] and many of the later lays.[18] As well as

Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn (1892). **12** See, for example, Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 6546–54. **13** Ibid., ll. 2485–587. **14** Ibid., ll. 2588–94. Translations from this text are my own. **15** See, for example, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'Anecdota from the Stowe MS no. 992', *Revue celtique*, 6 (1883–5), 173–92 at 185–6; idem (ed. and trans.), 'Cáilte cecinit', *Ériu,* 1 (1904), 72–3; L.Chr. Stern (ed. and trans.), 'Die Bekehrung der Fianna', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 5 (1905), 179–83. **16** J.S. Kühns, 'An edition and translation of the *Agallamh beag* from the Book of Lismore' (2006). **17** N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Agallamh na seanórach*, 3 vols (1942–5). **18** See, for example, Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, pp 178–83 (poem LIII).

seizing on aspects of *fianaigecht* literature, the author of *AS* promoted a sense of the tale's cyclic identity with earlier texts. The congruity of *AS* and texts whose scope, form and, often, themes are significantly different, such as 'Finn and the man in the tree'[19] or 'The quarrel between Finn and Oisín',[20] was achieved through the non-chronological unfolding of Finn's past. Frequent reminders, within the text, of Finn's acceptability to Christians temper the effect of the many passages which imply the opposite. Even accounts of Finn's unreconstructed *féinnid* nature, which dwell on violence and adultery, are incorporated into the work's conversion narrative. They are juxtaposed with depictions of Finn as proto-Christian and, moreover, the moral distance between these extreme portraits emphasizes the transformative potential of Christianity.[21] This effect was not confined to the narrative parameters of *AS*; it also allowed pre-existing works, whose depiction of the lifestyle of the *fían* was at some variance to that of *AS*, to be re-interpreted as elements in a large-scale conversion narrative. Therefore, the *AS* author can be seen to have proposed a particular type of possessive and authoritative relationship between his text and pre-existing *fianaigecht* works. This positioned his text as the primary articulation of a history of the *fían*, the main event of which was its encounter with Christianity. The focus of this study is on an aspect of *fianaigecht* tradition which has the potential to cause that relationship to break down, namely, the death of Finn.

The treatment of Finn's death in Acallam na senórach

There are three short references to the circumstances of Finn's death in *AS*. The first, in order of appearance, occurs at the end of Caílte's account of the young Finn's defeat of the creature Aillén at Tara. This occasion is used to describe Finn's assumption of the leadership of the *fían*: 'Ocus do bhí Finn isin ríghi sin … nogu bhfuair bás ocus aided a n-Aill in bhruic a Luachair Degadh'[22] ('And Finn held that kingship … until he died at Aill in Bruic in Luachair Dedad').

The second reference to Finn's death occurs in the poem 'Raid a Chailti'. No details are provided of the circumstances of Finn's death, although there is an intriguing allusion to its cause. The poem's penultimate quatrain states:

> Gu ba ṡecht do chreid in rí . Find mac Cumaill Almaini
> in sechtmad fecht do bói ar fás . is de thainic a thiugbás.[23]

> The king, Finn son of Cumall, of Almu, believed seven times | the seventh time he was a grown man, from it came his death.

19 K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'Finn and the man in the tree', *Revue celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9. **20** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Fianaigecht* (1910), pp 22–7. **21** Cf. Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', 33–4. **22** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1766–7. **23** Ibid., ll. 2583–4.

The third reference occurs at the end of the pitiful tale of the murder of a wife of Finn by Clann Morna which is related by Caílte as an explanation of a number of place-names in Patrician-era Ireland. As is customary, the episode ends with a poem. Its final quatrain states:

> Do marbad Find na Feinde . ic tabairt a laechleime,
> is do bris mo craide ar tri . ruc mo nert uile ar nemfní.[24]
>
> Finn of the *Fían* was killed, making his warrior-leap, | and my heart broke in three, it brought all my strength to nought.

AS, therefore, presents the following information about Finn's death:

1. he died at Aill in Bruic, in Luachair Dedad, in Munster;
2. his death was related to his pre-emptive Christian faith;
3. his death occurred while he was leaping.

Since *AS* can present past events in a piecemeal fashion, these three statements may be intended to describe the same happening. In that case, Finn would have died at Aill in Bruic, while making a 'warrior-leap', and this death would have been somehow dependent on his belief in God. Even so, sources external to *AS* suggest that the author was invoking two distinct traditions of Finn's demise. This is an involved response to the traditions of the death of Finn which is revealing of how *AS* was related to other Finn-Cycle tales.

Aided Finn *and its influence*

The author of *AS* was invoking a pre-existing tradition in his third reference to Finn's demise. The 'leap of death' motif – which may have originated in the use of the term *léimm* to refer to the passage from life to death[25] – features prominently in a short and imperfectly preserved tenth-century work.[26] The tale in question is usually known as *Aided Finn*, a title which appears as an eleventh- or twelfth-century addition to Tale List A.[27] In it, Finn, elderly and infirm and with his powers ebbing, has been deserted by the *fían*. In order to prove that he is still capable of martial leadership, he determines to attempt a difficult jump across the River Boyne. En route, he meets a woman making curds. The first fragment breaks off here. The second begins with a reference to a prophecy that

24 Ibid., ll. 2873–4. **25** See *DIL*, s.v. *léimm* (c). I am grateful to Dr Arbuthnot for alerting me to this connotation of *léimm*. **26** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'The death of Finn mac Cumhaill', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 462–5. For his dating of the text, see Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxv. **27** P. Mac Cana, *The learned tales of medieval Ireland* (1980), pp 105–6.

Finn would die were he to drink poison from an *adarc* ('horn'). Finn continues to the appointed spot on the Boyne but falls upon rocks and thereby dies. The tale then attests to the tradition that the Luigne were involved in Finn's death: the three sons of Uirgriu and Aicclech find and decapitate his corpse.

This slight text unites three elements that recur, singly or in combination, in virtually all accounts of Finn's death; hence, it could be argued that most versions of the death of Finn descend from the *Aided Finn* tradition. These are:

1. the leap (that is, Finn's death occurred when he failed to complete a jump across a stretch of water);
2. the Luigne (that is, the Luigne Temra were involved in Finn's death, often decapitating him);
3. the drink (that is, the act of drinking from an *adarc* or of drinking a poisoned drink caused or hastened Finn's death).[28]

It is striking that, with the exception of its reference to the leap, *AS* does not show the influence of a version of *Aided Finn*. The first mention of Finn's death made in the former text locates the event to Aill in Bruic and, thereby, anticipates a similar assertion in the *AB* poem beginning 'Ac so in fert' and in other versions of that poem preserved in later narratives.[29] Although the contexts for the statement are different in *AS* and *AB*, a case might be made for the influence of the former text on the latter here. However, it may be that this tradition predated the composition of *AS*. A gloss on a copy of the poem beginning 'Fianna batar i nEmain' also alludes to a tradition of Finn's death taking place at this location: '.i. la Aichlech mac Duibdrenn dorochair Find ac Ath Brea os Boaind ni a mBeola Broghaighe a Luachair' ('i.e. by Aichlech, son of Duibriu, Find fell at Áth Brea on the Boyne, and not at Beola Broghoige in Luachair').[30] The gloss is difficult to date precisely.[31] More to the point, it is impossible to determine how long-established or otherwise was the tradition which it rejects.

The second reference to Finn's death in *AS*, to the role played by his theism in his demise, is an apparently clearer instance of innovation in this text:

28 Murphy saw motifs 1 and 3 ('various accounts of a magically controlled death') as representative of a 'popular tradition' which contrasted with the 'learned' tradition of the 'heroic pseudo-historic' account represented by 2: *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. xlii. Such a distinction, if it could be proved, was clearly no barrier to the blending of the motifs in *Aided Finn*. See also Ó hÓgáin, *Fionn mac Cumhaill*, p. 111. **29** Kühns, 'An edition', l. 1032. This poem is closely related to two other poems in which the same line appears, namely, that beginning 'Acc so in feart' in *AS* II (Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, ii, p. 57, l. 1) and 'Ac so in fód' (poem XLIII) in *Duanaire Finn* (Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, p. 110, §40). **30** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'On the deaths of some Irish heroes', *Revue celtique*, 23 (1902), 303–48 at 328, §29, and 340. On Finn being obliged to make annual leaps in Luachair Dedad in order to stay alive, see Appendix, B17, 18. **31** The poem has been dated to the tenth century on the basis

this idea will be considered in conjunction with the work's neglect of the most productive tradition of the death of Finn in the period before the writing of *AS*. This is the convention that Finn was killed by the Luigne, at – when specified – Áth Brea, on the Boyne.

Tesmolta Cormaic ocus aided Finn

In the wake of *Aided Finn*, there are many attestations to the Luigne tradition, but the brevity of most of these accounts makes it difficult to explore the connotations that this account of Finn's death would have had when the author of *AS* was writing. A useful exception is the twelfth-century *Tesmolta Cormaic ocus aided Finn*.[32]

The opening section of *Tesmolta Cormaic* introduces Finn enthusiastically:

> Is e iarum ba taisech teglaig 7 amus 7 ba gilla con la Cormac .i. Finn mac Cumaill. Air is i cethern is dech la ri Temra do gres a gilla con. Ni tuc a lam a laim tigerna oclach bu ferr anas Finn, uair ba oclach ar oclachus 7 ba brugaid ar brugaidecht 7 ba rí ar righacht 7 laechdacht laich lais 7 ba hamas ar amsaine 7 ba rignia ar fianachus, air is fri Find samailter cech rignia o sin gus aniug.[33]
>
> He, Finn son of Cumall, was chief of Cormac's household and hired soldier and kennel-attendant, since the best warrior in the opinion of the king of Tara is always his kennel-attendant. No warrior became a lord's vassal who was better than Finn, since he was a soldier with regard to soldiery, a hospitaller with regard to hospitality, a king with regard to kingliness, he had the valour of a valorous man, he was a mercenary with regard to military service and he was a kingly champion with regard to membership of the *fían*: therefore, from then until today, it is to Finn that every kingly champion is compared.

of its ascription to Cináed úa hArtacáin: Stokes, 'On the deaths', 303; Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxii. Rudolf Thurneysen, however, proposed a date of no earlier than the first half of the twelfth century: *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, i (1921), p. 20. For discussion of the manuscript see R. Flower, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum*, ii (1926), pp 259–82.

32 The tale is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 610, fo. 121b1–2, and in London, British Library, Egerton MS 1782, fo. 24b2. For an edition and translation of the prose sections of the latter see S.H. O'Grady (ed. and trans.), *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols (1892), i, pp 89–92, and ii, pp 96–9. The text is preserved in that manuscript in conjunction with two other items concerned with Finn's death ('The chase of Síd na mBan Finn' and 'Fianna batar i nEmain'; see Appendix A3, A4/C20 and A9). For an edition of the Laud text see K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *The Cath Finntrága* (1885), pp 72–6. On the date of the tale see Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxvi.

33 Meyer, *The Cath Finntrága*, p. 73, ll. 24–8. Translations from this text here and below are my own.

Such a depiction represents a significant key-change from *Aided Finn*, which portrayed Finn as a diminished and pitiful figure, abandoned and aware of his impending death. Yet, despite the initial distance between their portraits of Finn, *Tesmolta Cormaic* soon aligns itself with *Aided Finn*. Still as a preliminary to the narrative proper, we are told that Cormac is now dead, and Finn is debilitated by age and deserted by the *fían*. As was the case in *Aided Finn*, we hear too of a prophecy that Finn would die should he drink from an *adarc*. It is said then that Finn journeys one day from Almu until he finds himself at Adarca Iuchba, in Uí Failge territory, where he drinks from a well. He then puts his thumb under his tooth of knowledge and, by means of *teinm laída*, he realizes that he has set in motion events that will lead to his death. (He hardly needed to access supernatural knowledge to discern this: he has drunk from a place named Adarca Iuchba which translates into English as 'the horns of Iuchba'.)[34] He travels onto Druim Breg in the territory of the Luigne where, as it is said, dangers await him because he has slain Uirgriu of the Luigne Temra. The Luigne muster against him, and Aicclech son of Duibriu kills and beheads him.

Although possessed of an oddly stilted style – the narrative is verbose and staccato in turn, perhaps because of the conflation of material – the dynamics of this tale are striking. Central to its structure is the relationship of the passage which introduces Finn to passages which envelope and undercut it. Immediately following his introduction is a statement which establishes a contrast between Finn's former, laudable state and his present circumstances. It is stated that, whereas he used to dominate the landscape as hunter, he is now weakened and rarely ventures from Almu.[35]

The preceding section, which comprises the tale's opening passages, allows for another comparison of Finn, this time with Cormac. The respective relationships of Finn and Cormac to the natural world are central to this comparison. As king, Cormac can influence the land's productivity. The portrait of him as a just king employs the imagery of superabundant fields and rivers and quickly maturing animals familiar from a wide range of texts which consider sovereignty.[36] Yet, Cormac's reign is not predicated on a contract with an unspecified Otherworld force, as is common within those texts. Considerable

34 The toponym Adarca Iuchba only occurs in *Tesmolta Cormaic*, but the form Adarca Iuchna had a wider currency. See P. Ó Riain et al. (eds), *Historical dictionary of Gaelic placenames* (2003–), s.v. *Adharca*. On this and on the place-name Léim Finn see R. Baumgarten, 'Placenames, etymology, and the structure of *fianaigecht*' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 1–24 at pp 22–3. It should be noted too that the husband and son of Iuchna, daughter of Goll mac Morna, are killed by Finn in 'The chase of Síd na mBan Finn and the death of Finn'. Murphy related that text to poem XIX in *Duanaire Finn* which states that Finn fell *tre inġin Ġuill*: *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. 43. **35** Meyer, *The Cath Finntrága*, p. 74, ll. 30–1. **36** On the motif of the fecundity of land ruled by a just king in the context of a wider discussion of Cormac see Ó Cathasaigh, *The heroic biography*, pp 62–5.

emphasis is laid on his status as an anticipatory theist. It is said that Scriptural/canon law was always a reference point for Cormac, as he demonstrated right judgement and he is likened to King Solomon.[37] It is said of him: 'Dorigne tra tir tairngire d'Erinn ana ré'[38] ('He made a promised land of Ireland in his reign'). This is an idea which is also expressed in the passage that describes Ireland as a land of milk and honey:

> Lan a sreabainne do nús o cech boin ina re. Do barr in feoir do cnuasaigtea in mil iarna fertain do nim do-som tria firinne a flatha. Is 'na linn na fagbadais lestair don loim ar a imad,[39] air no bidis na bu oc siliud na loma cen anad.[40]
>
> His streams were full of milk from each cow in his reign. The honey was gathered from the surface of the grass after it was granted to him from heaven through the truth of his sovereignty. In his time, vessels were not found for the milk because of its abundance, since the cows used to produce the milk ceaselessly.

Another set of expectations surround Finn as a *féinnid*. A recurring theme in the Finn Cycle is the relationship between the *fían* and its rural surroundings: the natural world is the domain of the *fían*, to be explored and exploited, named and remembered by its members.[41] The narrative plays the stock depictions of king and *féinnid* off each other, using Cormac's conformity to the norms of his role to highlight Finn's departure from the conventions of his. Cormac could not find sufficient drinking vessels in his kingdom while Finn cannot recognize drinking vessels named in the landscape.[42] Cormac had manipulated nature to his advantage while Finn's disengagement from his surroundings has fatal consequences. Whereas Cormac's character shows the harmonious mingling of the ideals of pre-Christian and Christian kingship, the depiction of Finn can be said to appropriate an overtly pagan aspect of the imagery of sovereignty which was omitted from the portrait of Cormac. Finn recites a poem which relates how a series of women, who are linked to Otherword dwellings and personages, dispensed drinks for him;[43] the pleasing effects of those drinks are

37 Ibid., p. 73, ll. 5–8. **38** Ibid., p. 73, ll. 20–1. On the resonances of the term *tír tairngiri* see D.N. Dumville, '*Echtrae* and *immrama*: some problems of definition', *Ériu*, 27 (1976), 73–94 at 79–81. **39** The Egerton 1782 reading here is *asa inad dúthaig* ('out of his native land'): Meyer, *The Cath Finntrága*, p. 73, n. 14. Further to this see below, n. 42. **40** Ibid., p. 73, ll. 10–12. **41** On the notion that the *fían* – and not kings – held dominion over Ireland's natural resources see, for example, the 'Raid a Chailti' passage in *AS*: Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2468–83. **42** This contrast between Cormac and Finn at this point is arguably more marked in the Egerton text wherein attention is drawn to the availability of drinking-vessels in Cormac's land: see above, n. 39. **43** On the drink of sovereignty see, for example, M. Herbert, 'Goddess and king: the sacred marriage in early Ireland' in L.O. Fradenburg

contrasted with the fatal drink at Adarca Iuchba. Moreover, Finn's characterization does not conform to the image of a proto-Christian *féinnid* that was beginning to become familiar to contemporary audiences. Another woman mentioned in *Tesmolta Cormaic* may be significant in this regard. Finn's wife, who foresees his downfall, is said to be the daughter of Fothad Canainne. The Old-Irish poem put in the mouth of that adulterous *féinnid* was the subject of renewed interest in the Middle-Irish period when it received a new prose introduction.[44] The result is that Fothad Canainne's posthumous recognition of God's existence and the merits of the religious life comprises an important element of the literature which brings the *fían* into contact with Christianity. The portrait of Finn in *Tesmolta Cormaic* does not acknowledge the trend towards the theist *féinnid*, so that Finn is unfavourably compared to Cormac, within this tale, and to a range of *féinnidi*, including Fothad Canainne, within the broader context of the Finn Cycle: not only has he failed to find faith during his lifetime, but, in this account of his death, Finn is also denied the chance to explore Christian faith in the afterlife.

Tesmolta Cormaic does not orient itself around the 'common, fixed point' of the advent of Christianity to the *fían*. For that reason, it would not have suited the purpose of the author of *AS* to invoke the Luigne tradition as encoded there, since central to the *AS* narrative is the notion that Finn became a believer during his lifetime. The assertion, in *AS*, of a connection between Finn's belief in God and his death in the pivotal 'Raid a Chailti' passage may well be a response to the *Tesmolta Cormaic* narrative in which Finn dies a pagan and is not the narrative's 'good pagan'.

Conclusion

As it stands, the treatment of Finn's death in *AS* is oddly under-emphasized. One explanation for this may be that to dwell on the death of Finn would be to disrupt the congruity established between the lives of Finn and his companions in pre-Christian Ireland and the experiences of St Patrick and his retinue centuries later. Yet, the positing of a cyclic mentality on the part of the work's author allows for the consideration of further reasons for the narrative's restraint concerning Finn's death. The accounts of Finn's demise are unusual among the Finn-tales in that they could not easily be incorporated into his narrative of *AS*. The oblique treatment of Finn's 'conversion' and vague internal chronology meant that most pre-existing narratives about the pagan Finn could be accommodated within the limits of the newly defined cycle, in which *AS* was the central text – the action recounted in any text depicting Finn in a manner which was not explicitly Christian could be interpreted as having taken place before Finn understood the existence of God. The 'death-tales' alone defied such re-

& E. Lyle (eds), *Women and sovereignty* (1992), pp 264–75. **44** Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, pp 1–21.

conciliation with *AS*, since works which described Finn's demise without reference to his theism posed a threat to the cycle's emerging identity. It is this – the capacity of the accounts of the death of Finn to break the cycle – that may be key to understanding the strange treatment of Finn's death in *AS*. What is found in that text may be an attempt to shroud that event in some mystery, in order both to acknowledge pre-existing traditions and to situate *AS* within a newly interpreted cycle of Finn-material.[45]

Appendix: Accounts of the death of Finn mac Cumaill

The following charts group the published literary traditions of the death of Finn with reference to the motifs contained within them. As well as references to depictions of how Finn died, included here are statements made about ways in which Finn could die. References to the burial places of Finn have not been included, as they do not necessarily add to our knowledge of the manner of Finn's death. For example, the poem beginning 'Ac so in fert' in *AB* states that Finn died at Aill in Bruic in the context of describing his burial at Almu.[46] This discepancy between place of death and place of burial suggests that other references to the site of Finn's grave may not be strong evidence for the location of his death. In the tables below, the texts appear in rough chronological order. Reference is given to editions of the texts and, where possible, to their dating on their first appearance in the appendix. Where bibliographic details of texts and/or references to their dating have already been supplied in the body of this essay, they are not repeated here.

A. DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE LUIGNE

Group A comprises the works in which Finn is killed by members of the Luigne. It is usually specified that the death occurred on the Boyne, most often at Áth Brea. This, the most frequently occurring motif, is found in eleven separate works. With the exception of the tenth-century *Aided Finn*, all examples of this motif are late Middle Irish or later. It is possible that it was the inclusion of this motif in *AS*, which I have seen as presenting a self-consciously authoritative account of the history of the *fían*, which prompted its popularity in subsequent works.

	Title	*Details*
1	*Aided Finn*	This tale survives in two fragments. Fragment 2 refers to a prophecy concerning the drinking of poison from a horn and says that Finn fell to his

45 I would like to thank Dr Ralph O'Connor for his comments on an earlier draft of this essay. **46** Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. 100.

		death at the Boyne, that the three sons of Uirgriu and Aicclech mac Duibdrenn (of the Luigne) found the corpse, and that Aicclech decapitated Finn.
2	Poem on the *dinnshenchas* of Brug na Bóinne by Cináed úa hArtacáin († 975)[47]	Finn is killed by the Luigne at Fertair na Fáilenn.
3	Poem beginning 'Fianna batar i nEmain' by Cinaed úa hArtacáin († 975)[48]	Finn is killed by the Luigne at Áth Brea.
4	Gloss on 'Fianna batar i nEmain' at fo. 52a of Egerton 1782	Finn's death occurred at Áth Brea and not at Beola Broghoige Luachair.
5	Poem beginning 'Annálad anall uile' by Gilla Cóemáin[49]	Finn's death is caused by the 'treachery' of the sons of Uirgriu. The event is located *a hAlmain*.
6	Annals of Tigernach, *s.a.* 283[50]	Finn is decapitated by Aicclech and the sons of Uirgriu at Áth Brea.
7	Poem beginning 'Rodíchned Find', found as a marginalium in Book of Leinster, fo. 164, marg. sup.[51]	Aicclech kills Finn.
8	*Tesmolta Cormaic ocus aided Finn*	Finn is elderly. His wife prophesies that he will die if he drinks from an *adarc*. Finn drinks from a well in Adarca Iuchba. Finn's own powers of prophecy confirm the approach of his death. He gives battle at Brea on the Boyne to the Luigne led by the sons of Uirgriu. Finn is decapitated by Aicclech.
9	'The chase of Síd na mBan Finn and the death of Finn'[52]	Finn, elderly and debilitated, is trying to flee Ireland because his death has been prophesied. With only a small number

47 E.J. Gwynn (ed. and trans.), *The metrical Dindshenchas*, 5 vols (1903–35), ii, pp 12–13, ll. 35–6. The poem has been dated to the tenth century on the basis of its ascription to Cináed úa hArtacáin: Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, p. xxii **48** Stokes, 'On the deaths', 310, §29 (Book of Leinster), 322, §28 (Laud Misc. 610), and 328, §29 (Egerton 1782). **49** P.J. Smith (ed. and trans.), *Three historical poems ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin* (2007), pp 31 (on dating to 1072) and 199–200, §§29–30. **50** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Annals of Tigernach: second fragment', 17 (1896), 6–33 at 20–1. Meyer dated this entry to the eleventh century: *Fianaigecht*, p. xxvi. **51** R.I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (1954–83), iii, p. 729. **52** Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, pp 68, ll. 1–14, and 98, ll. 7–12. Meyer dates this text to the 'thirteenth [or] fourteenth centuries': ibid., p. xxxi.

		of followers, he gives battle to the Luigne at Áth Brea. The tale breaks off as the sons of Uirgriu close in upon him.
10	*Duanaire Finn*, poem XIX, beginning 'Anocht fiordheireadh na ffian'[53]	Finn dies at Áth Brea,[54] through the treachery of Goll mac Morna's daughter.
11	Annals of the Four Masters, s.a. 283[55]	Finn is killed at Áth Brea by Aicclech and the sons of Uirgriu.

B. THE LEAP OF DEATH

Group B comprises seven works in which Finn dies while leaping.[56] With the exception of *Aided Finn* (B12), which dates from the tenth century, all instances of this motif occur in texts which stem from late Middle Irish or Early Modern Irish. Although many instances of this motif occur in the texts most directly related to *AS*, the occurrences themselves do not appear to draw directly on that text. The location of the leap is not often specified. While *Aided Finn* places the site of Finn's fatal fall on the Boyne, a later text, *Feis tighe Chonáin* (B17, 18), has Finn performing annual leaps to prolong his life in Luachair Dedad and *a Magh na Cēidi theas*, a location which Maud Joynt, citing Edmund Hogan, located between Westmeath and Offaly.[57] Thus, item B17 could be grouped with the three examples in Group C of Finn's death being located at Aill in Bruic, in Luachair Dedad. The leap is variously described as a 'foolish leap' (*léim baoisi*) and a leap occasioned by, or otherwise related to, old age (*lém aoísi*).

	Title	*Details*
12	*Aided Finn*	This tale survives in two fragments. Fragment 1 has Finn as elderly and deserted by the *fían* and deciding to attempt the feat of jumping across the Boyne. Reference is made to a woman making curds at Maistiu.
13	*AS*, poem beginning 'Is truag in gnim'	Finn dies as a result of a 'warrior-leap' (*laechleim*).

53 Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, i, p. 48, l. 5. For the date see ibid., iii, pp cxvi (*c.*1250) and 42 (thirteenth century). **54** Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, i, p. 48, l. 5, reads *a ccaì Breġäa*. I accept Murphy's suggestion that this should rather be read as *ag Áth Breä*: ibid., iii, p. 43. **55** J. O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, 7 vols (1848–51), i, pp 118–21. **56** See above, n. 25, on the probable origin of this motif. **57** Joynt, *Feis tighe Chonáin*, p. 97. Note too the reference to a tradition that Finn made an annual leap on May morning at Gleann Dealgain, near Dungarvan, Co. Waterford: N. O'Kearney (ed. and trans.), *Feis tighe Chonain Chinn-shleibhe* (1855), pp 130–2, n. 6. O'Kearney also suggested that the episode, which he termed 'Léim na Brice Bloighe', should be located to the Dungarvan area (p. 128, n. 1).

14	*AB*, poem beginning 'Cuncha, cnoc os cind Life'[58]	Finn dies because of a 'leap of folly' (*léim baoisi*). Finn is 230 years old at the time of his death.
15	*AS* II, poem beginning 'Cnuca, chnoc ōs linn Life'[59]	Finn dies as a result of a 'leap of age' (*lém aoísi*).
16a	*AB*, poem beginning 'Ingnadh in fhis tarfas dam'[60]	Finn dies as a result of a 'leap of age' (*ac leim aisi*), which is said to be 'a silly movement' (*reim baoísi*).
16b	*AS* II, poem beginning 'Iongnadh fis tádhbhas damh'[61]	Finn dies as a result of a 'leap of age' (*gā léim aoísi*), which is said to be 'a leap of folly' (*léim baoísi*).
17	*Feis tighe Chonáin*[62]	Finn completes a leap in Luachair Dedad to win the woman, Athnat. He must repeat the feat annually or die.
18	*Feis tighe Chonáin*[63]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to complete an annual leap over a stone while carrying a stone, which was a condition of marriage.

C. DEATH AT AILL IN BRUIC

The texts in Group C all date to the late Middle-Irish period or after. *AS*, *AB* and *AS* II all bear witness to this tradition. While *AS* may have played a role in popularizing the tradition, it is most plentifully attested to by a single poem, the earliest occurrence of which appears to be in *AB*. 'Aill in Bruic' and 'Beola Broghoige Luachair' refer to a single location.[64]

	Title	*Details*
19	*AS*	It is stated that Finn died at Aill in Bruic, in Luachair Dedad.
20	Gloss on 'Fianna batar i nEmain' at fo. 52a of Egerton 1782	Finn's death occurred at Áth Brea and not at Beola Broghoige Luachair.

58 Kühns, 'An edition', ll. 1308–27. This section of *AB* also appears as M. Power (ed. and trans.), 'Cnucha cnoc os cionn Life', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 11 (1917), 39–55 at 44, §§50–4. **59** Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, iii, p. 178, l. 21. On the date of *AS* II see ibid., i, p. xxxi. **60** Kühns, 'An edition', ll. 1381–2. **61** Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, iii, p. 181, ll. 1–2. **62** M. Joynt (ed.), *Feis tighe Chonáin* (1936), ll. 148–204. Joynt did not comment directly on the date of the text but (referring to TCD MS H.4.14) noted the scribe's 'mixture of early Mid. Irish with later spelling': ibid., p. vii. **63** Ibid., ll. 1453–80. This passage is translated in Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw*, p. 268. **64** Ó Riain et al., *Historical dictionary*, s.v. *Beola Broghóige*, *Broic*.

21a	*AB,* poem beginning 'Ac so in fert'	Reference is made to the death of Finn *a mBroic.*
21b	*Duanaire Finn*, poem XLIII, beginning 'Ac so in fód'[65]	Reference is made to the death of Finn *a mBroic.*
21c	*AS* II, poem beginning 'Acc so an feart'	Reference is made to the death of Finn *i mBroic.*

D. OTHER TRADITIONS OF FINN'S DEATH

Group D is made up of ten further accounts of Finn's death which do not readily fit into Groups A-C. With the exception of what has been taken, probably erroneously, to be the earliest extant reference to Finn's death (D22),[66] the earliest of these references appears in *AS.* The most significant text to appear in this group is *Feis tighe Chonáin* which presents a series of references to taboos which, if broken, will bring about Finn's death.

	Title	*Details*
22	Poem beginning 'Innid scél scaílter n-airich' ascribed to Flannacán mac Cellaig	Finn dies on a Wednesday.
23	*AS*, poem beginning 'Raid a Chailti'	Finn's death arises out of the last occasion on which he 'found belief' in God.
24	*Cath Finntrágha*[67]	It is implied that Finn's death occurred on the battlefield at Ventry.
25	*Feis tighe Chonáin*[68]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to catch

65 Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, pp 100–13 at p. 110, §40. On the poem's date (*c.*1200) and Murphy's view that is based on the 'middle Irish poem' B21a see ibid., iii, pp cxvi and 100. **66** K. Mulchrone (ed. and trans.), 'Flannacán mac Cellaich rí Breg hoc carmen', *Journal of Celtic Studies*, 1 (1950), 80–93 at 84 and 87, §15: 'Cētain Find feb ro fīrad; | cētaīn Cūscraid arrāllad; | cētaīn fīanna, fecht mbludach, | a rubad Cet mac Māgach' ('The Wednesday of Find as has been confirmed. The Wednesday of Cúscraid who was slain. The warlike Wednesday – a famous occasion – Cet son of Mágu was slain'). Meyer assumed that this was a reference to the death of Finn mac Cumaill: 'Here for the first time the name alone without the patronymic suffices to indicate the famous warrior' (*Fianaigecht*, p. xxi). However, note Mulchrone's compelling argument: 'As our poem deals with the heroes of the Ulster cycle mainly … this Find is probably Find son of Mágu, slain by Conall Cernach together with his six brothers (among them Ailill, Cet, Scanlán) in the battle of Airtech' ('Flannacán mac Cellaich', 91, §15*a*). Meyer dated this poem to the ninth century on the basis of its ascription to Flannacán (*Fianaigecht*, xxi); if it is discounted, our earliest account of Finn's death is the tenth-century *Aided Finn*. **67** C. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Cath Finntrágha* (1975), ll. 1290–2, 1337–8, 1348–9. On the dating of the text to the latter part of the fifteenth century see ibid., p. x. **68** Joynt, *Feis tighe Chonáin*, ll. 1428–41.

	a specific bird every year, which was a condition of marriage.
26 *Feis tighe Chonáin*[69]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to bathe in a particular vat.
27 *Feis tighe Chonáin*[70]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to consume an annual feast prepared by a lover.
28 *Feis tighe Chonáin*[71]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to perform a particular cast.
29 *Feis tighe Chonáin*[72]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to consume an annual feast prepared by his mother.
30 *Feis tighe Chonáin*[73]	Finn outlines ways in which he could die, one of which is the failure to kill a *muc slánaidhe* yearly in a particular way.
31 Poem beginning 'Meabhair liom an ní do fil'[74]	Finn dies *tre bhéim baeis*[75] aged about 310.

69 Ibid., 1481–3. **70** Ibid., 1483–6. **71** Ibid., 1487–93. **72** Ibid., 1494–7. **73** Ibid., 1497–520. **74** N. O'Kearney (ed. and trans.), *The battle of Gabhra* (1854), pp 33–40. The source of the poem is not mentioned and I have not been able to locate it. **75** It is possible that *béim* here is a corruption of *léim*.

The deployment of some hagiographical sources in *Acallam na senórach*

Ann Dooley

In attempting to explore the relationship of *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*)[1] to texts that may be presumed to have inspired it or caused a ripple reaction in it, one can gain the impression of a textual trajectory that seems, again and again, to be deliberately obscured. Máirtín Ó Briain first laid out an account of this scrambling of sources in terms of the relationship to *AS* of the Patrician mission-dossier and of Irish dynastic backgrounds contemporary with the presumed time of the narration.[2] In addition, the relationship of *AS* to the developing tradition of *fianaigecht* lays is complex. *AS* is an anomaly in this process as it seems to take over these pre-existing ballads[3] and redact them in prose with only fragmentary elements of the lays themselves in evidence. The relationship becomes renaturalized, so to speak, with the later *Agallamh na seanórach* (*AS* II),[4] where a much more inclusive attitude to the ballad tradition is evident. This conversion, in *AS*, from verse to prose leaves occasional awkwardness when the speaker (usually Caílte) is both a narrator of tales to Patrick and also a subject of and/or a participant in the tale he is reciting.[5]

The overwhelming impression left by this process of literary transformation is that there are strong deviations from the general tenor of well-known *fianaigecht* scenarios when they appear in new guise in *AS*. For example, the pre-existing and over-arching structure of chronic hostility towards the *fían* of Finn on the part of the *fían* of the sons of Morna is muted in *AS*, so that, in the main, only occasions of restrained heroic behaviour, leading to accommodation and accord, remain. This can be seen clearly in the slight divergence from received tradition concerning the old warrior Garad and his tale to the women

1 W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438. **2** 'Some material on Oisín in the Land of Youth' in D. Ó Corráin et al. (eds), *Sages, saints and storytellers* (1989), pp 181–99 at pp 185–6. **3** For a commentary on the basic dating of the lays see E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp cvii–cxxi. For a re-evaluation of Murphy's dating see J. Carey, 'Remarks on dating' in J. Carey (ed.), *Duanaire Finn: reassessments* (2003), pp 1–18. **4** N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Agallamh na senórach,* 3 vols (1942–5). **5** Awkwardness in these transitional moments is seen, for example, in the Arthur incident, where the prose has Caílte employ first person plural verbal forms and then introduce a quatrain – which begins 'Doratsamar Artúir linn' – with 'atbert Caílte': Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 251–5. A similar situation is in evidence at ll. 5649–50.

of the *fían*.[6] In the independent lay on this subject, Garad burns down the women's house about them.[7] In *AS*, the tale serves simply as a warning *exemplum* about sources of social unrest: a paradigm of domestic restraint directed at two potentially verbally uncontrollable sources, women and old men.[8]

In addition, in *AS*, episodes featuring the Tuatha Dé Danann, which are especially marked and sustained in the latter half of the collection, are assiduously cherry-picked, so that the more pleasing, amenable and beneficial properties of these tales become dominant.[9] Elements of overt danger to humans, where expressed, are either safely cordoned off as threats which can be controlled by a Christian invocation or left to stand as warnings;[10] it is clearly the love of a malicious woman, for example, that causes the temporary madness of Finn.[11] Evils from the Otherworld are easily controlled by Christian clerical intervention and even by the actions of a Christianized person of good-will in Caílte. It is probably for an ambition such as this that the whimsical and pleasing tale of the wedding of Finn's harper is allowed to stand as a complete lay:[12] in *AS*, it serves as an exemplary point of departure for the important and freshly invented prose-tale of the musician Cas Corach. Strung throughout the latter half of the narrative, this story lays down an important point about the clerical validation of combined music and song entertainments with *fianaigecht* subject-matter. Thus, the lay of the Otherworld harper is ancillary to a major message concerning new aesthetic social values and is also part of the key formulations by the author of the ethics of enjoyment of communal entertainments. This is a development vital to the late twelfth-century aesthetic and, as part of new social and performative norms, it is both parallel to and in competition with the evolving alternative literary model of Classical-Irish poetry. The intertextually marked levels of *AS*, and the resulting field of potential readings to which they give rise, are complex. In this essay, I will examine only one aspect of this clustering of signification, namely, the use of hagiographic textual models that are likely to have been utilized in the composition of the work.

The Patrician model

The *Vita tripartita* rarely functions as a direct or single source for *AS*, but in the latter text there are clear echoes of the verse in the *Vita tripartita* on the well of

6 Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1362–447. **7** E.J. Gwynn (ed. and trans.), 'The burning of Finn's house', *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 13–37. **8** For a discussion see J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985), pp 73–4 and 289–90. **9** In the case of the three mysterious Otherworld warriors who assist Finn with their magical powers and their dog (Stokes, '*Acallamh*', l. 5449ff.), they are neither accepted fully nor condemned; their tale seems to balance continuously on the edge of wonder. **10** I have discussed some of these issues in a forthcoming article, 'Pagan superstition and Christian redress in *Acallam na senórach*', to be published in the proceedings of the Celtic Cosmology and the Power of Words Conference, University of Ulster, Coleraine, 2008. **11** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 4933–96. **12** Ibid., ll. 630–84.

Aghagower (Achad Fobair).[13] Elsewhere in the Patrician dossier, the idea of Patrick's missionary encounter with *fían*-bands of the past is present since Tírechán[14] and may have spurred the creation of a pagan–Christian encounter as found in *AS*. To illustrate how complex the deployment of sources in *AS* can be, I take as my first example the marked incident of Patrick and his visit to Cashel.[15] The *Vita tripartita* expands Tírechán's concluding line on Patrick's baptism of the king of Munster's sons at Cashel ('baptitzauit filios Nioth Fruich i tír Mumae super petram Coithrigi hi Caissiul', 'he baptized the sons of Nie Froích in the land of Munster on Patrick's Rock at Cashel')[16] with the further details on the baptism of King Óengus himself in a manner that clearly shows its add-on status:

> Luid Patraic iar suidiu *hi crích Muman* do Chaisiul na ríg. In tan asráracht Óengus macc Nad Fraíg isin matain, bátar inna arrachta huili inna ligib, 7 faránaicc Patraic cona muintir hi toeb in dúne. Ro fer fáilti fríu, 7 nus beir leis hisin dún co maigin hitá *lecc Pátraic* indíu. *Et ro baithis íar suidiu maccu Nad Fraích* … Et foráccaib bendachtain soburthain forru, 7 ro bendach in dún .i. Caisel, 7 asbert nad mbíad acht óenguine and cu bráth. Ocus ro boí .uii. mbliadnai la Mumain. Hiss ed dorímet ind éolaig, dorónai oifrend for cech sechtmad immbairiu do neoch imrulaid i mMumuin.
>
> A mboí Pátraic oc baitsed Óengussa, luid ermted na bachlai tréna thragid Óengusso. Asbert Pátraic: 'Cía ro mbá nad erbairt frimm?' 'Is ed inda lemm, rombu sí córus na creitme,' ol sé. 'Rot bía a lóog,' ol Pátraic, 'ní rega do chomarba (.i. sil Óengusso 7 Ailella macc Nad Fraích) aeded ngona óndíu co bráth'; ní rí Caisil corón ordnea comarba Pátraic 7 co tarda grád fair.[17]
>
> After this Patrick went into the province of Munster to Cashel of the Kings. When Oengus, son of Natfraich, arose in the morning, all the idols were on their faces. And he found Patrick with his household beside the fort. He gave them welcome and brought them into the fort to the place where Patrick's flagstone is to this day. And after this Patrick baptized Natfraich's sons, and left blessing and prosperity upon them; and *blessed* the fort, namely, Cashel, and said that till doom only one slaughter would take place there. And he abode seven years in Munster. The learned calculate that he celebrated Mass on every seventh ridge which he traversed in Munster.

13 W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), *The tripartite Life of Patrick*, 2 vols (1887), i, pp 112–13; K. Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic* (1939), ll. 1264–88; Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 7766–7. **14** L. Bieler (ed. and trans.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (1979), pp 154–6, §40. **15** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5386–447. **16** Bieler, *The Patrician texts*, pp 162–3, §51, ll. 33–4. It is possible that the phrase *super petram Coithrigi* contains a garbled tribal name: see P. Ó Riain, 'When and why *Cothraige* was first equated with *Patricius*?', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 49/50 (1997), 698–711. **17** Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, ll. 2286–303. Italics my own.

> While Patrick was baptizing Oengus the spike of the crozier went through Oengus' foot. Said Patrick: 'Why did you not speak of this to me?' 'It seemed to me that it was a rite of faith,' said Oengus. 'You will have its reward,' said Patrick, 'your successor,' that is, of the seed of Oengus and Ailill son of Natfraech 'shall not die of a wound from today for ever.' No one is king of Cashel until Patrick's successor confers ecclesiastical rank upon him.[18]

It might be assumed that the *Vita tripartita* is the basic source of the corresponding scene in *AS*, since it has Patrick coming to Munster from Leinster via Ossory (from Mag Raigne), more or less as in *AS* (where he journeys from Ráith Mór Maige Feá, near Mullaghmast). However, what one actually finds is a much more complex set of textual echoes and references which serves a contemporary historical configuration. This scene also raises the more immediate question of the range of source-material which the author/compiler of *AS* had at his disposal.

In *AS*, the (fictional) king whom Patrick meets at Cashel is Eogan Lethderg mac Óengusa, whose patronym gestures towards genuine Patrician historical tradition. However, there is no baptism in the scene in *AS*; it is assumed that the kings are already Christian. Here, after a swift journey from Leinster to Lis na Láechraide (later known as Lec (or Cloch) na Cét), Patrick receives the fealty of Eogan Lethderg and his nobles. Eogan is described as the king of the two provinces of Munster (a late, post-1100 title).[19] He and his nobles make a kind of general obeisance to Patrick, which includes their territory and patrimony, their wealth and land. Benén, who is among Patrick's followers, picks up the cue and demands a gospel-fee from the high-king of Munster ('Screpall soiscéla, a airdrí Muman!').[20] Upon learning what the exotic term means, the last-mentioned offers Cashel itself to Patrick ('in baile seo a tá ina fuarusa hé do fognum do co brath da muintir ina diaid').[21] A marginal note in one copy of the text states here: 'Is and tuc rí Muman Caissil do Patraic mac Alpraind'.[22] Patrick is to take possession by mounting Cloch na Cét, and all that he sees of Munster, in any direction, will be his. As Patrick steps on the stone, the sun rises up in his face and the hill is cleared of demons.[23] Patrick blesses the out-

18 Stokes, *The tripartite Life*, ii, pp 195 and 197. I have made minor adjustments to the translation and italics are my own. **19** M. Dillon (ed. and trans.), *Lebor na cert* (1962), pp ix–x, 22, ll. 283–6, and 23, n. 1. See also F.J. Byrne, 'The trembling sod: Ireland in 1169' in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, ii (1987), pp 1–42 at pp 13–14. **20** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', l. 5393. **21** Ibid., ll. 5400–1; A. Dooley & H. Roe (trans.), *Tales of the elders of Ireland* (1999), p. 151. **22** Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 610, fo. 136a1. **23** This is reminiscent of the liberation of Patrick from a demon by the rising sun in the various *Vita* recensions of the original *Confessio* incident: A.B.E. Hood (ed. and trans.), *St. Patrick* (1978), pp 26–7 and 45, §20. The incident does not occur in the *Vita tripartita*.

crop with the gift of *comairle* ('good counsel' – a synodal reference?), nine clerical advocates who fast on behalf of the king of Munster and a continuous angelic presence; he also leaves upon it one of three perpetual fires.[24] Caílte then begins answering questions about Cloch na Cét, and we learn that it was there that Finn first used his 'tooth of wisdom' and believed in the true God:

> 7 cora fallsiged nem 7 talam 7 creidim in ḟirDía forórda, 7 do thuidecht-sa d'indsaigid Eirenn, a Tailgind … 7 naim 7 fireoin 7 creidem cros 7 crabad inti.[25]
>
> And heaven and earth were revealed [to him] and belief in the most excellent True God, and that you, dear Adze-Head, would come to visit Ireland … and that holy and righteous men would dwell here with belief in crosses and pious acts.[26]

In response to a question about who it was that first built a fortress and a dwelling there, Caílte replies that it was Fiachu Muillethan, son of Eogan. Then Patrick, with no introduction, pronounces a lengthy prophecy, in verse form, beginning 'In cloch so a hainm Cloch na cét'.[27] When Patrick has finished speaking, the king of Munster thanks him with a formula often used to thank Caílte: 'Adrae buaid bennachtain, a m'anum, a naemPatraic … is mór d'fis d'ḟír-eolus ro indesbair duind imaraen'[28] ('May you have victory and blessing, my dear Patrick … great is the knowledge and true direction you have told to all of us').[29]

A great deal is happening here on many levels. Patrick, virtually silent up to now in matters of lore, has suddenly spoken out at Cashel. What he says shows an interesting bias to which I will return. In the *Vita tripartita*, the embellishment of the baptism tale consists of the blessing of the *dún* with a quatrain and a directive ('ní rí Caisil corón ordnea comarbae Pátraic co tarda grád fair'), as well as the prophecy that there will be only one mortal wounding in Cashel. By contrast, *AS*, with the reference to Benén and the *screpall*, seems to be drawing its inspiration from the tenth-century text 'The story of the finding of Cashel'.[30] Taken together, we have the blessing and the above-mentioned marginal note conflated with the historical gift of Cashel to the church by Muirchertach Ua Briain at the synod of 1101. The donation of Cashel to the Irish church is recounted in the Annals of the Four Masters:

> Comhdhál Leithe Modha h-i cCaisiol im Muirchertach Ua m-Briain, co maithibh laoch & clérech, im h-Ua n-Dúnáin, uasal-epscop & aird-shenóir

24 The other two, according to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 487, fo. 45b1, belong to Brigit of Kildare and Colum Cille: 'Teine Brighde a n-Ath Dara teine Coluim Cille'. **25** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5416–19. **26** Cf. Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, pp 151–2. **27** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5425–38. **28** Ibid., ll. 5439–40. **29** Cf. Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, p. 152. **30** M. Dillon (ed. and trans), 'The story of the finding of Cashel', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 61–73 at 68–9.

> Erenn, conidh annsin tucc Muirchertach Ua Briain an eadhbairt na tucc rí réimhe riamh .i. Caisiol na Ríogh do eadhbairt do chráibhdheachaibh cen orlaimh laoich na cleirich fair acht craibhdich Erenn co coitchend.
>
> A meeting of Leath-Mogha was held at Caiseal by Muircheartach Ua Briain, with the chiefs of the laity, and Ua Dunain, noble bishop and chief senior, with the chiefs of the clergy; and on this occasion Muircheartach Ua Briain made a grant such as no king had ever made before, namely, he granted Cashel of the Kings to the pious ones, without any claim of layman or clergyman upon it, but of the religious of Ireland in general.[31]

In the *AS* version, the emphasis is not on the Uí Briain, hence not on the moment of the historical donation. I presume this is also the point of coming up with a 'new' tradition of Cashel having been founded by Fiachu Muillethan who, although a member of the Eoganacht, was not a direct ancestor of the Dál Cais.[32] The story of the prehistorical Fiachu is contained in the tenth-century tract *De bunad imthechta Eoganachta*.[33] Considering that the Uí Briain had succeeded, by the end of the twelfth century, in renewing their paramountcy in Munster, it seems that this core aspect of Cashel traditions in *AS* belongs rather to a slightly earlier period in the 1130s when the Armagh reformers were making their mark in Munster and Cormac Mac Carthaig was building the great church at Cashel. If my idea of a Connacht base for a final version of *AS* is accepted,[34] then the western attitudes of the period show bias towards Cormac Mac Carthaig and against the Uí Briain. There is, perhaps, one other slight indication that hostility to the Uí Briain is intended here. As the king of Munster and Patrick move on southward from Cashel itself, they arrive at Ráith Chinn Chon. Here, the story is told of a wealthy landowner, Cellach mac Dubdét, who is disgracefully mean and insulting to the *fían* and receives the soubriquet Cenn Con from Finn. There is a Cellach mac Dubchinn of the Uí Chaisín, a branch of the Dál Cais, located in the barony of Bunratty, listed in the Dál Cais genealogies.[35] The area indicated, in *AS*, for the encounter (south of Cashel in Femen) does not lie within the lands of the Uí Chaisín;[36] nonetheless, the play with historical reality in the interest of etymology here is interesting.[37]

31 John O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, 7 vols (1848–51), ii, pp 966–71, s.a. 1101. **32** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5420–3. The tale of the miserable end of Cormac Cas, ancestor of the Dál Cais, is given in ll. 1166–204. **33** K. Meyer (ed.), 'Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde' in O.J. Bergin et al. (eds), *Anecdota from Irish manuscripts*, 5 vols (1907–13), iii, pp 59–63. **34** See A. Dooley, 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 97–126 at 122, n. 46. *AS* could also date from the period after the death of Mór, daughter of Muirchertach Ua Briain, wife of Cathal Croibderg. **35** M.A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (1962), p. 242. **36** On the lands of this sept see P. Nugent, *The Gaelic clans of County Clare and their territories* (2007), pp 84 and 144. **37** Etymological play with names

I come now to consider the *AS* version of the Patrician blessing. The poem begins with the following statements:

> IN cloch so a hainm Cloch na cét . sochaide bias uimpi ic ét,
> bid inad crabaid is cros . haithle cach arais ḟuaros.
> Caissil cenn Eirenn uile . benn ima teigfea teine,
> inadh a frith fis nime . gan chís do rig reomainde.[38]
>
> The name of this stone is the stone of hundreds | many the suppliants around it; | it will be a place of piety and crosses, | like every foundation I have encountered.
> Cashel is the head of all Ireland | a height traversed by a fire; | a place where the vision of heaven found, | without rent to any king before us.[39]

This passage seems to reflect the Annals' account of the donation of Cashel ('inad crabaid is cros'). In referring to the site as divinely revealed, these texts may imply knowledge of the angelic visions and royal dues mentioned in 'The story of the finding of Cashel'.[40] It is possible, however, that this tradition is no older than the summarized version in the introductory section of *Lebor na cert*: 'Indister do chisaib tuarustlaid Éirenn and ro orduig Benén … amal atfet Lebur Glindi Dá Locha'.[41] The latter text gives etymologies for Cashel (< *cais* 'hatred' + *ail* 'rock' or < *cís* 'rent' + *ail* 'law'),[42] but it does not mention Cloch na Cét; the most one can say here is that the earlier Cashel text might have suggested the impulse towards etymologizing this toponym in *AS*.

While, in *AS*, Cashel is lauded in ways that recall *De bunad imthechta Eoganachta* and *Lebor na cert*, the poem 'In cloch so a hainm Cloch na cét' moves on to qualify and update the tradition. The passage immediately following the extract already cited reads as follows:

> Bid maith mo chell as tír thuaid . a crich Connacht in morsluaig
> da fuígebsa, glan a lí . mo brata co coemgloní.[43]
>
> My church to the north will be good, | in the territory of peopled Connacht; | I will leave, pure its beauty, | my lovely fair salmon.[44]

is typical of *AS*: for example, at l. 3502, the well-known Armagh hereditary family is referenced somewhat satirically by the appearance of an individual called Méth Macha. **38** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5425–28. **39** Translations from this poem are my own, new translations of the work. **40** Dillon, 'The story of the finding', pp 66–71. **41** Dillon, *Lebor na cert*, pp 1–2. **42** See also K. Meyer (ed.), '*Sanas Cormaic: an Old-Irish glossary*' in O.J. Bergin et al., *Anecdota from Irish manuscripts*, 5 vols (1907–13), iv, pp 1–128 at §391. **43** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5429–30. **44** Reading *bratán*. The corresponding phrase in the *Vita tripartita* text is *mo dá brattán* and in the prose preface the same verb (*fo-ácaib*) is used: Stokes, *The tripartite Life*, ll.

If one accepts the emendation of *brata* to *bratán*, then this may be a reference to the well and salmon of Aghagower (Achad Fobair) as found in the *Vita tripartita*. This, then, may be a further piece of evidence to link *AS* with the latter site. Also significant here is that the Ulster church referenced is not Armagh but the new Anglo-Norman church of Downpatrick (fd. 1185), where the three patron saints of Ireland lay, according to medieval tradition.[45] The linking of three fires in the above-mentioned note in the Rawlinson copy of *AS* is also new; to my knowledge, it is the first time that the traditional foundational act of Cashel, the lighting of the fire, is associated with the tradition of the fire at Kildare, itself first mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis in the mid-1180s.[46] The older tradition of divine visions of the future of Cashel, centring on swineherds,[47] is replaced in *AS* by the prophetic Finn who marks the site for special attention as the place of his prefigurative conversion by faith.

This, then, is the thoroughly modern scenario in which the traditions of Patrick's mission, ongoing Cashel lore and new *fianaigecht* tradition mix. When read as contemporary statements, the materials on Cashel in *AS* show the realignment of the Patrician church in the twelfth century and the manner in which western-based Patrician churches were aligned with Eoganacht-based Patrician sites against Armagh. The narrative reflects the tensions of the period between the western Patrician sites and Tuam, the archiepiscopal see from 1152, concerning the control and revenues of these churches.[48] It would seem, then, that those involved in the compilation and transmission of *AS* were acutely aware of prior traditions and were bending them to suit their own purposes.

Finn and Leinster saints

I turn now to another section of *AS* where the imprint of Finn-tales on textual sources of another kind is heavily marked. The Leinster itinerary in *AS* contains lore on a number of monastic sites which are given associations with Finn. The following Leinster saints are alluded to: Mochua of Timahoe (Tech Mochua), Ciarán of Clonmacnoise, Cáemgein of Glendalough, Máedóc of Ferns, Moling of St Mullins (Tech Moling), Colmán Ela of Lynally (Lann Ela).[49] The first and the last of these occur out of geographical context. They frame the main group of narratives told as part of a Leinster visit or in response to a question from a Leinster king at the feast of Tara. The cluster is striking and the

1283–8. **45** See my comments in 'The date and purpose', pp 108–22. **46** J.J. O'Meara (ed.), *Giraldus Cambrensis in Topographia Hiberniae* (1949). The Rawlinson note may, of course, be later than the text of *AS*. **47** Dillon, 'The story of the finding', pp 64–6. **48** W.H. Bliss (ed.), *Calendar of Papal registers*: *Papal letters*, i (1893), p. 40. For a brief discussion of this incident see M. MacNeill, *The festival of Lughnasa* (1962), pp 76–7. **49** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2351–7, 1837–56, 2390–433, 3602–25, 2666–87 and 2382–869. See Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, pp 72–3, 56–7, 80, 81–2 and 88–90.

displacement of Mochua and Colmán Ela, whose monasteries were in greater Leinster, may be a deliberate attempt to spread hagiographical material more widely through the body of the whole text.[50] The question that the Leinster segment raises, of how to read the chronological sequencing here, is not easy to answer. I will consider two of the saints in detail.

Cáemgein of Glendalough

In *AS*, the story of Glendalough is told in the context of the great feast called by Díarmait at the hill of Uisnech.[51] Here, Caílte and Oisín are briefly re-united and give a joint storytelling performance. One of the first questions asked of them by the king of Leinster concerns their knowledge of the monster-haunted lake at the site of Cáemgein's monastery. This is the point when *AS* and hagiography make one of their closest associations, though *AS* finds its own saga-derived point of entry into the Cáemgein hagiographical material. Thus, according to *AS*, the monster of Glendalough derives from a piece of Mes Gegra's brain left over after the account in *Tallaind Étair*,[52] a tradition not recorded elsewhere. It may be significant also that Oisín, whose mother was traditionally regarded as having conceived in the form of a deer,[53] is the one who delivers information on the Otherworld lover of Finn; this woman, when rejected by Finn, turns into a deer and lures the *fían* into the water where one hundred of their warriors and dogs are destroyed by a lake-monster. *AS* follows this with a poem which seems to relate, though in a rather confusing fashion, the story told of the rapacious lake-monster in the hagiography. The prophecy elements, elaborately prepared for by the ritual of Finn chewing his thumb, are mixed in with a verse-rendering of the monster's attack on the *fían*, beginning 'Glend Rois enaig bid fir dam'.[54]

The poem seems to suffer some incoherence, possibly from trying to combine *fianaigecht* and hagiographical traditions of the lake and its monster. Before recounting his own experience of the monster, Finn must prophesy the glory of Cáemgein's church:

50 I have commented on the skewing towards Connacht of the genealogy given in *AS* for Mochua: 'The date and purpose', p. 107. Colmán Ela's displacement may have something to do with his genealogy; he is of Ulaid ancestry: P. Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (1985), p. 50. None of the printed Lives of Colmán Ela supply any information relevant to this issue. His new location in *AS* serves to patch over a rather marked neglect of northern saints and religious houses, with the exception of Downpatrick. **51** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2390–437. **52** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The siege of Howth', *Revue celtique*, 8 (1887), 47–64. **53** The earliest reference to Oisín's mother, Blaí Derg, as a deer comes from marginal quatrains in the Book of Leinster version of a *dindshenchas* piece on Áth Liac Finn (R.I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (1954–83), iii, ll. 21821–8). The evidence of this note suggests that such material was coalescing by the mid-twelfth century, though Meyer assigned an eleventh-century date to the extra quatrains: *Fianaigecht* (1910), pp xxv–xxvi. **54** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2411–32.

> Glend Rois enaig bid fir dam . bid bind guth cluic nach than,
> gé beth fó damaib ruada . robsat ili a ardbuada.
>
> Ros Enach's glen – true for me – | ever sweet will be the sound of a bell; | though it be a habitat of red deer, | great were its virtues.[55]

The sequence of thought in the poem seems to be the following: after the initial section (just cited), the idea of the disturbance of the lake by the monster and the destruction of the hunting-party is introduced; Cáemgein's eventual restraint of the monster is prophesied; the poem returns to the destruction of the *fían* but also mentions that the monster raised a wave on the lake; in the last section, the fair of Cáemgein, the royal graveyard and the sanctuary for powerful and poor are invoked.

The three vernacular Lives of Cáemgein (one in prose, one in verse and one prosimetric narrative) are clearly inter-related.[56] The first and second Lives associate Patrick and Finn in joint prophecy of the coming of Cáemgein. Both contain references to a prophecy of Finn and to the misadventure of the *fían* in the water as they tell of Cáemgein's binding of the monster in the lower lake. In these Lives, the time elapsed between prophecy and fulfilment is calculated on a Patrician timeline, however, and not with reference to the *fianaigecht* chronology of *AS*. There is also a relationship between the second Life (Plummer's *Betha Caoimhgin* II) and the poem 'Glend Rois enaig' in *AS*. Both poems refer to the disastrous hunt undertaken by the *fían*, to the upset in the lake when the monster bestirs herself (with both storm and colour-changes to the water *vis-à-vis* surrounding foliage), to the saint's binding of the monster and to the monastery as the site of a fair, a graveyard of kings and a place of protection. The two texts do not use the same vocabulary to describe the monster, however. For example, a significant section of the *AS* poem reads:

> Enach feinde, fadb fulaig . imrulaig garb re conaib
> siat srotha, elta enaig . rian tregain terchta trogain.
> Crotholl Feinne fuath curraig . os duillib ruada [a]r rindib [Stokes: ruada rindib],

55 Ibid., ll. 2411–14. This and subsequent translations from this poem are my own and represent new translations of the work. **56** See C. Plummer (ed. and trans.), *Bethada náem nÉrenn*, 2 vols (1922), i, pp 125–67. Plummer sees I (the prose Life) as a summary of II (the poetic Life) with extra material not occurring elsewhere. II is a metrical summary of III (the prosimetric Life), the latter, in its present form, having had reinserted some of the poetic material of II (C. Plummer (ed.), *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*, i (1910), pp liv–lvi). However, there is no *fianaigecht* material in III and, moreover, the section of II marked 'iii*b*' by Plummer (which gives the main details of the involvement of the *fían* in the monster story) may once have stood somewhat apart as it is not numbered in sequence in the manuscript: *Bethada*, i, p. 135, n. 1.

sceo gaithi céo tar rindib . os rengaib lobar [Stokes: leabra] ar lindib.
Coscrach atchiu-sa an muirbich . rosc dreacuin [Stokes: dercain] brath tar buidnib,
taebúaine taithnem taidlech . biaid Cáemgin ga mbia cuibrech.
Muirbech lonn locha hEnaig . tonn 'na degaid adraigi,
sissi ac slaidhi na Féinde . óig na feinde 'ga slaide.[57]

A trap for the *fían*, a hidden obstacle, | harsh weather overcame the hounds; | rising of the torrent, flock of the marsh, | abandonment of the lake, diminishing dry land (?).
Great wounding of the *fían*, terror of the swamp, | redness on spear-points above the foliage; | wind and fog over the headlands, | over the bindings (?), sickness on the pools.
Victorious I see the water-monster, | dragon-faced, a doom on the hosts; | green-sided, brilliant, flashing; | it will be Cáemgein who will bind it.
Fierce water-monster of Loch Enach, | a wave rises up after it; | it wounding the *fían* | and the warriors of the *fían* wounding it.

Betha Caoimhgin II, meanwhile, has:

Aiccmeil hí péist locca luicc	Dread was the monster of the miry lough
Re denamh uilc agus áir;	In wreaking harm and slaughter;
Meinic tucc maidm aran bféin,	Often did it defeat the 'fían',
'S ar Fhionn féin go niomat aigh.	And Finn himself with great terror.
Do gabh Caoimghin loch na baidbe	Coemgen went to the lake of the female monster,[58]
Go moch, mar dob áil le Dia,	Early, as was pleasing to God,
'S dochuir an pheist i lLoch lágha,	And drove the monster into the lesser lake;
Ag éistsecht na tratha ní bia …	It will not be listening to the canonical hours …
Laidir in snaidm dochuir Caoimghin,	Strong was the bond which Coemgen imposed,
Tucc maidm ar phéist locha gloin;	He defeated the monster of the fair lough;
Do chengail go docht is go daingen	He imprisoned tight and fast
A corp 'sa mainder a bfuil.	Its body in the lair in which it is.
'Ar nionntadh on taobh go 'roile	When there turns from one side to the other
Gacha bliadhna an péist fil and,	Each year the monster that is there,

57 Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2415–22. **58** Plummer translates this line as 'Coemgen took up his position in the lough of the scald-crow': *Bethada*, ii, p. 131, section iii*b*. I opt for 'female monster' as a more contextually suitable term than 'scald-crow'. The editors suggest that Loch na Baidbe could be taken as a place-name.

Eirgidh an loch cró-dherc os áirde The lough rises on high blood-red
Comhard na cairrge osa cionn. Level with the crags above it.[59]

The vernacular Lives come from Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's collection and were found by him in manuscripts connected to the hinterland of Cáemgein's *paruchia* – at its western edge, in Leighlin, in the case of the first Life, and in the vicinity of Glendalough itself, in the case of the second.[60] However the Lives are themselves related, it seems to me possible, from internal evidence, that the longer *Betha Caoimhgin* II, the one most directly related to *AS*, may well have been written during the abbacy of Tomás Ua Tuathail, nephew of Archbishop Lorcán. It clearly refers to a time when pilgrimage and the *oenach* were still viable enterprises,[61] but when the abbey was experiencing a great deal of ecclesiastical and administrative interference from a Dublin administration following the breakup of the Uí Muiredaig kingdom and the downfall of the Uí Thuathail rulers of the area in 1178.[62] Themes such as alienation of the old privileges of the monastery, resentment of the foreigners,[63] the praise and support expressed for the *oenach* in the Life – and, perhaps, its verse format – might signal its use for a mixed clerical and secular audience that would include those disaffected Uí Thuathail dynasts who were sheltered by the abbey.[64] Aggressive alienation of land from Glendalough, through royal grants, was happening apace between 1186 and 1212, the date when the suffragan diocese was finally absorbed by Dublin, with the abbey itself barely surviving until to 1229.[65]

If it can be accepted that *AS* and the first and, especially, the second surviving vernacular Lives of Cáemgein influenced each other, then there is a rather tight chronological framework for a borrowing process, given the more-or-less agreed dating of *AS* to the end of the twelfth century or beginning of the thirteenth.[66] It is clear that there is much hagiographical activity in this period; it was patently a time of ecclesiastical change and crisis. Richard Sharpe has seen the Latin Lives of the so-called 'Dublin collection' as a work by, or for, Ailbe Ua Maelmuaid, bishop of Ferns from 1218, which represents a collecting and updating of Lives that had not changed substantially from their original eighth-century forms.[67] This does not begin to solve our dilemma here, as it does not give any clues as to processes of composition and accretion in the vernacular Lives of Cáemgein. Neither does it shed light on when this particular *fianaigecht* material was imported into both of the vernacular Lives and into *AS*. The mon-

59 Ibid., i, pp 135–6, section iii*b*, ll. 1–8, section iv, ll. 1–8 [edition]; ii, p. 131, sections iii*b* and iv [translation]. **60** Ibid., i, p. xxx. **61** Ibid., i, pp 142–5, sections x and xi. **62** A.S. Mac Samhráin, *Church and polity in pre-Norman Ireland* (1996), pp 160–1. **63** Plummer, *Bethada*, i, pp 145–8, sections xii and xiii. **64** Mac Samhráin, *Church and polity*, p. 162. **65** Ibid., p. 165. **66** See Dooley, 'The date and purpose', 98–100. **67** *Medieval Irish saints' Lives* (1991), pp 97–8. This has been disputed by other scholars. Mac Samhráin, for example, sees the Latin Life of Cáemgein as accepting fresh material in the eleventh century: *Church and polity*, pp 9–10.

ster is quite at home in a hagiographical context and its binding in the lower lake by Cáemgein is well-integrated into the Lives as an important part of the monastery's healing cult for humans and livestock alike.[68] It has to be re-invented in a secular legendary form – as part of the brain-ball of Mes Gegra – for *AS*. There may well have been a legend of a defeated monster lying behind the custom of cattle-dipping in the lake, part of a popular cult of the saint's feast as reflected by the second vernacular Life. This may have been part of pre-existing hagiographical lore used by *AS*; when it came to be written down in *Betha Caoimhgin* II, it had the added cachet of a popular Finn-frame. Can we say that the *fianaigecht* material might have been one way in which a vernacular Life was popularized for presentation to a mixed lay and secular audience?[69]

Máedóc of Ferns

The senario in the Ferns material in *AS* is also the feast of Tara and is put as a question on the origin of some names, including Ferns, by Finn mac Faeburdeirg, the son of the king of the Uí Chennselaig, who is present at that assembly. Again, Oisín takes over from Caílte in answer to this query. He names Fern mac Cairill, son of the king of the southern Déise, who was killed at Ferns by Goll mac Morna. At his burial, Finn puts his thumb in his mouth and foretells the future glory of the monastic centre and the Masses that will be said there. Then follows the poem on the monastic foundation which begins 'Ath Ferna'.[70]

With few minor variations, the prose and poem unit in *AS* is essentially the same text as in Plummer's *Betha Máedóc Ferna* II. Plummer does not offer a precise dating of this Life,[71] but it is likely that its Leinster material is earlier than the text's other elements and was imported into a fuller vernacular Life and there combined with northern traditions relating Máedóc with sites in Uí Briuin Breifne.[72] Indeed, it may be a quite late medieval compilation. Because what is essentially an item of *fianaigecht* lore is inserted, rather awkwardly, into the hagiographical material, it would seem to me that here the borrowing is from some form of *AS* and not vice versa.[73] The copy of *AS* contained in Dublin, University College, OFM, MS A4 (Fr, below; my readings) is actually somewhat closer in wording to the *Betha* than are the other manuscript witnesses to *AS* used by Stokes in his edition. The poem in *AS* begins:

68 Plummer, *Bethada*, i, p. 135, section iv. **69** Perhaps it was this *fianaigecht* material, with its over-concession to popular legend, which so displeased the O'Clery collector that he described II as *go salach* – a comment which puzzled Plummer: *Vitae*, i, p. lv, n. 3. **70** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2604–24. **71** *Bethada*, i, pp xxxiii–xxxvii. **72** See C. Doherty, 'The transmission of the cult of St Máedhóg' in P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages* (2002), pp 268–83. **73** For the Finn material in this Life see also Plummer, *Bethada*, ii, pp 349–50.

Ath Ferna . áit a mbia mAedóg ḟedbda,
aníu cid imda a chuana . bid imda a duana [Fr: nualla] nemda.
Ath Ferna na féorainde . bid fedbda in fer 'ga ṁbia,
da roiset ann anmcharait . bat imḟoiscsi do Dia [Fr: bid ait ionmain le Dia].[74]

Corresponding to this, *Betha Máedóc Ferna* II has:

Ath Ferna,
Áit a mbia Maodocc feabda;
Aniu cidh iomdha a cuana,
Bidh iomdha a nualla nemhda.

Ath Ferna na feorainne,
Bidh feabhda an fer 'ga mbia;
Doroiset ann anmcarait;
Bidh ait ionmain le Dia.[75]

This leads me to believe that, just as the version of *AS* in MS A4 is not directly dependant on that contained in the Laud, Rawlinson and Lismore manuscripts, so too the compiler of *Betha Maedóc Ferna* II is not depending directly on any of the existing manuscript versions of *AS* but must have access to a version with A4-type features.

Following this passage in *AS* comes the lore on St Mullins ('Ros mBrocc'), delivered by Caílte as part of a tale involving the sons of Morna. This sequence ends with the break-up of the royal assembly. The king of Tara returns with Patrick to Tara, the king of Ailech takes Caílte north, and the king of Leinster takes Oisín with him to Leinster. After this, Oisín fades from the narrative. Action from Leinster is not resumed until line 4080 of Stokes' edition where Caílte and Patrick meet the son of the king of Leinster who has been abducted by women of the *síd* and is now on the run from them[76] – a point at which some of the most interesting and complexly interwoven 'new' narratives in *AS* ensue. It is possible that the sporadic appearance of Oisín in the body of *AS*, only in association with Leinster hagiographical material, reflects another (and possibly slightly older) version of the amalgamation of *fianaigecht* tradition and hagiography which is brought into the surviving *AS* and from there to the written vernacular traditions of these saints. Oisín, one remembers, is the hero of the *Acallam bec*, a text which seems to date from roughly the same period as *AS*. As an overall tentative conclusion, then, I suggest that the Leinster association of *fianaigecht* and saints' Lives may represent a slightly earlier kernel of *AS* textual tradition assembled before a western slant was put on the whole work.

74 Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2613–6. **75** Plummer, *Bethada*, i, pp 192–3. **76** The story in the Life of Cáemgein concerning the Leinster dynast's son who is sent to the saint for protection against an Otherworld woman may be reflected here: ibid., i, pp 150–2 [edition], and ii, pp 146–7 [translation].

Keeping the *Acallam* together

Joseph Falaky Nagy

Despite the truncated or unfinished nature of the text as we have it, *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*) is a heroically ambitious, larger-than-life composition, worthy of the heroes Finn, Caílte, Patrick and the others who constitute its subject. This reader would go so far as to say that *AS* is to Finn and *fianaigecht* what *Táin bó Cúailnge* is to Cú Chulainn and the Ulster Cycle. Both are attempts to construct a *summa heroica*, a canon of heroism, that not only calls upon relevant pre-existing tradition and texts but also invites succeeding generations to fine-tune the materials assembled. Hence, both the *Táin* and *AS* exist in multiple versions, and part of the pleasure of reading these texts is comparing and contrasting how these different recensions treat the same episode or theme.[1]

To appreciate the similarity in ambition behind the *Táin* and *AS* is not to deny that these are two very different kinds of texts. Basically, the *Táin* tells *a story*, while *AS* tells *stories*. The generic designation and verbal noun *táin* (deriving from the prepositional prefix *do-* and the verbal stem *aig-*,[2] the latter cognate with and similar in range of meaning to Latin *ago* 'I drive, move, act, do') refers not just to the activity of cattle-raiding, which certainly does happen in the story the text tells, but also to strong motives, actions and forward motion. The term *acallam* (verbal noun of *ad-gládathar* 'addresses, speaks to')[3] and the closely related *immacallam*[4] were both used in Irish literary tradition to designate a certain kind of composition.[5] These terms refer to speaking as opposed to doing and to responding to what has been spoken; in other words, dialogue, dialectic, exchange of information, or proposal and response – each a legitimate way of describing what 'happens' (if that is the right way to put it) in texts designated (*imm*)*acallma* in our manuscripts.

And yet, 'driven' as the story of the *Táin* is by Medb's desire for the Brown Bull of Cúailnge and by Cú Chulainn's countervailing desire to protect his

1 For instance, one might compare the *macgnímrada* ('boyhood deeds') of Cú Chulainn as rendered in 'Recension I' and 'Recension II' of the *Táin*: C. O'Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (1967), ll. 738–1217; eadem (ed. and trans.), *Táin bó Cúailnge: recension 1* (1976), ll. 398–824. Similarly, one might compare the relationships amongst Caílte, Oisín and Patrick as depicted in the earlier *Acallam* and in the later version: W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in E. Windisch & W. Stokes (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438; N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Agallamh na seanórach*, 3 vols (1942–5). **2** *DIL*, s.vv. *do-aig* and *táin*. **3** Ibid., s.vv. **4** Ibid., s.v. *immacaldam*. **5** See further J.F. Nagy, *Conversing with angels and ancients* (1997), p. 3.

province and his reputation as its defender, structurally the text is highly episodic. It includes, for example, the celebrated extended flashback sequence of the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn,[6] told by heroes who can speak from their own experience about what happened. The embedded nature of some of the narrative material of the *Táin* and the framing of a key portion of it in terms of first-person narrative resembles the format of *AS*, which is far from being all 'frame' and features a great deal of notable incident and even narrative development.[7]

It would hardly be original to call the *Táin* an epic; in fact, some scholars have even proposed that the text was composed with the model of classical epic, as it was available to the medieval Irish *literati*, very much on the mind of its composer(s).[8] It would, however, be relatively unprecedented to label *AS* an epic. I would say, though, that the designation fits, and not just because *AS* has to do with heroes and heroism,[9] or because it established a trend, a tilt in the direction of *fianaigecht* storytelling and poetizing that profoundly influenced late medieval/early modern literature and oral tradition even as recorded in the last two hundred years. *AS* is also epic in its nature and function in an etymological sense. At the heart of our term *epic* is the Greek word for 'word', and Homer's *Iliad*, the apogee of Greek epic, is more than the story of the wrath of Achilles or of a few pivotal days in the prolonged siege of Troy – it is also a demonstration, from beginning to end, of how real heroes not only 'walk the walk' but also 'talk the talk'.[10] This balancing act between 'talk' and 'walk' is precisely what we see linking the embedded narratives of *AS* and the embedding master-tale. The former would seem to be merely the verbiage of old men with hyperbolizing memories were it not for the extraordinary monuments that Caílte and Oisín uncover, bearing mute witness to their stories, and were it not for the feats they accomplish in the course of the frame-tale. Contemporary actions echo the heroic deeds of old.

In the *Iliad*, the wrathful Achilles will go to any length to preserve his status as the 'Best of the Achaeans', even if it brings pain and suffering to his fellow Achaeans. The singer of this tale staunchly promotes Achilles' image as well, upholding the system of values that makes Achilles the best and carefully preserving his hero's number-one ranking, even while showcasing the valour of others who enjoy the limelight in Achilles' absence. Similarly, in both the *Táin*

6 See above, n. 1. **7** It can be argued that Patrick and Caílte experience a change in their relationship and that their behaviour and attitudes undergo modification in the course of *AS*. **8** See, for example, R. Ó hUiginn, 'The background and development of *Táin bó cúailnge*' in J.P. Mallory (ed.), *Aspects of the Táin* (1992), pp 29–67 at pp 35–41. **9** On the particular form and function of heroism associated with Finn and his *fían* see M.-L. Sjoestedt, *Gods and heroes of the Celts*, trans. M. Dillon (1949), pp 81–91. **10** This is a pervasive theme in R. Martin, *The language of heroes* (1989). See also Martin's application of this performative approach to early Irish material in 'Keens from the absent chorus', *Western Folklore*, 62 (2003), 119–42. For further discussion see J.F. Nagy, 'Fighting words', *Oral Tradition*, 18 (2003), 194–5.

and *AS*, the task of the storyteller-author and that of the heroic protagonist complement each other. The storyteller shares in the glory of the hero, while the latter can enjoy his undying fame thanks to the author who does his job as virtuosically as the hero does his. In *AS*, however, this relationship between heroic subject and heroic storyteller is complicated by the fact that Finn, the 'real' hero of the story or of the stories-within-a-story, is not actually present except insofar as he is represented by Caílte, the prime narrator, who embodies the full range of the heroics of the *fían*. To use the terminology of Irish poetic performance, one could say he is *rec(c)aire* ('reciter')[11] to Finn the *fili*, a distinguished poet and prophet all the more admired in his absence. Or, to resort to another *rec(c)aire*, meaning 'vendor',[12] it is Caílte's job to 'sell' Finn to the world of Patrick and the church, just as the mission of *AS* is to spread the word about *fíanaigecht*, to give it literary cachet and to align it with new and fashionable trends in culture, society and literature.[13]

It is in a particular episode of *AS* that we find perhaps most vividly on display the extent to which this text artfully balances the heroic profile of the departed Finn with that of the living Caílte.[14] Also conspicuous in this episode is the deftness with which the composer of *AS* utilizes Caílte to achieve the same effect in the world he recalls as that which the composer himself is attempting to achieve with *AS* for his own audience. The passage in question has Patrick, the king of Leinster (his current host) and the former's retinue, including Caílte, coming to a ford in the River Slaney and settling on a hill nearby, preparing to watch a hunt. The king asks Caílte a question about the name of the hill: Why is it called Ard Fostada na Féinne ('Hill of the Retaining of the *Fían*')? Caílte explains:

> 'One day Finn and three troops of the *fían* came to this ford, and as we were sitting here, we saw a lone girl sitting on the jutting rock on the far side of the ford, a shiny tunic about her, an all-green cloak with a golden pin, and a diadem, the mark of a queen, on her head. She said, "Let one of you, [members of the] *fíana* of Ireland, approach and talk with me [literally, 'have *acallam* with me']." Sciathbrec [elsewhere said to be a member of the *fían*'s inner circle and the organization's official *saerfher cluiche*[15] ("gamesman")] responded and rose to speak with her. "What is your desire, girl?" he asked. "Finn mac Cumaill," said the girl. And so Finn went to the ford to speak with the girl himself. "What is your name, dear, and what would you like?" "I am Dairenn daughter of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda," she said, "and I have come to cohabit with you, provided I receive *tinnscra* and *turchrecc* ('payment')." "What

11 *DIL*, 2 *reccaire*. **12** Ibid., 1 *reccaire*. **13** On the 'commercial' relationship between the performer and his audience see J.F. Nagy, 'Merchants of myth in ancient and medieval Celtic traditions' (forthcoming). **14** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 4933–96. **15** Ibid., ll. 6588–9.

would be the payment?" asked Finn. "Your agreement to be only with me for a year, and after that to spend half of your time with me." "I would not grant that to any woman in the world and certainly not to you," said Finn. At that, the girl put her hand in a *clithar* ("pocket, recess") of her dress and brought forth a cup of white silver, full of good-tasting mead, and gave it to Finn. "What's this?" he asked. "Good-tasting, intoxicating, sweet mead," she said. It was *geis* ("taboo") for Finn to refuse food or *fled* ("drink"), so he took it and drank the mead. Immediately, he went mad. He turned to the *fían*, and anything he knew of crime, fault or lapse in battle concerning every man in the *fían*, he flung in their faces, what with the drunkenness that the woman had brought upon him.

Then, the worthies of the *fían* got up and left Finn, going back to their homes, so that no one was left on this hill except Finn and I [that is, Caílte]. Then, I went after the *fían* and said to them, "Men, don't abandon your lord on account of the destruction a sorceress from the *síd* has brought upon him." Twelve times I collected them and brought them back on this hill. And when the end of the day came and night drew near, the poison finally left Finn's tongue. The last time I brought the men back, Finn's right mind returned to him, and he would have preferred to die in battle than to live any longer. That was the one of the two worst days of my life,' said Caílte, '[these being] the day I had to keep bringing back the *fían* and the day when I freed Finn from Cormac by bringing the wild herd to him. And so this is called *Ard in Fhostada* ("Hill of the Retaining") and *Ath in Fhostada* ("Ford of Retaining").'[16]

Before discussing the significance of this tale of Sisyphus-like travail, let us consider the episode's placement in the text and its pointed reference to other nodes in the network of *fíanaigecht* story. This episode comes directly after the conclusion to an extended story in the frame-tale itself, probably the happiest of the relatively few happy endings that take place in *AS*.[17] The king of Leinster's son, who had been kidnapped at an early age by a pair of supernatural females but who, many years later, escapes from the *síd* and takes refuge with Patrick and Caílte, is returned by them to his parents.[18] Patrick's guarantee that Áed will never again be susceptible to Otherworldly kidnappers or to the magic of the *síd* caps off this joyous return of a lost child to his parents, an operation that demonstrates a remarkable degree of co-operation amongst Patrick, Caílte and the musician Cas Corach, a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann (the people of the native Otherworld) who had attached himself to Caílte in order to learn as

16 My translation. **17** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 4080–106, 4619–45, 4790–822 and 4888–932. **18** On this episode see J.F. Nagy, 'Life in the fast lane: the *Acallam na senórach*' in H. Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic literature and society* (2005), pp 117–31 at pp 129–31.

much as possible about Finn and the *fían* and who, by taking Áed on as his pupil, assists in concealing his identity until he is safely back in his father's court.

What happens to Áed is perhaps the most conspicuous example of a narrative pattern that comes up frequently in *AS*, wherein Patrick, Finn or Finn's stand-in, Caílte, repatriates a lost son or daughter or provides them with a new home and family. Patrick is always successful in this effort, while the others sometimes are not, but their involvement in such efforts on behalf of vulnerable youngsters whom they adopt temporarily emerges as a key area of mutual concern for saint and warrior alike. The *féinnidi* are involved because they are connoisseurs of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood,[19] while Patrick has a stake in this child-rescue in his role as father-like missionary who is trying both to bring a pagan society (that is, a people alienated from God) into the fold and to realign social and familial allegiances. Returning Áed to his royal parents, therefore, becomes a task that unites the Christian saint, the hero of the *fían* and even the *síd* musician (representing the 'good' aspect of the Otherworld as opposed to, for example, the sinister women who stole Áed in the first place).

How ironic, then, that in the episode that follows (the Ard in Fhostada story told by Caílte), Finn in the pagan past is shown to be susceptible to the same kind of female supernatural malevolence from which Patrick guarantees that Áed will be free in the Christian future. In the same episode, moreover, Caílte has one of the two worst days in his life, attempting to hold together the bonding artifice of the *fían* whose members, twelve times in one day, return home to their quotidian lives. In doing so, they reject and are rejected by their demented leader Finn who, in this nightmarish situation, uses his knowledge to dissolve the *fían* instead of doing what he usually does, namely, putting that knowledge to good use on behalf of the *fían*.

In the frame-tale episode preceding the Ard in Fhostada story, there is no mention of Áed being supplied with a wife after he is brought home by Patrick and company, although an arranged marriage for the young person being repatriated is sometimes pivotal to this 'lost and found' story pattern in *AS*. In fact, the name Doirenn (clearly a multiform of Dairenn, the name of Finn's Otherworldly female nemesis in the Ard in Fhostada episode) comes up in connection with opportune matrimony in an earlier section of *AS*. She appears in the story Caílte tells about the three sons of the mythical high-king Lugaid Menn and their unusual strategy for winning fame and fortune.[20] This happens to be one of the few stories in *AS* which, on the surface, seem to have absolutely nothing to do with Finn and the *fían*. On closer inspection, however, we see that what happens to the high-king's children touches on one of the key themes in *fianaigecht*. These youths, having reached the age of man-

19 See further J.F. Nagy, 'Fenian heroes and their rites of passage' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 161–82. **20** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 354–468. On this story see also A. Dooley, 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse,* 34 (2004), 97–126 at 105–6.

hood, go to their father, asking for their inheritance. Expressing a remarkably modern-sounding sentiment, Lugaid tells them that he has no intention of giving them anything, just as no one gave him anything when he started out, that everything that he ever won came through his own good fortune and tenacity, and that all he will give them is the advice that they try to do the same. Reeling back from this 'tough love' treatment, the boys come up with an unusual solution to their problem: they will wage a hunger-strike against the Tuatha Dé Danann until they are given what they want and need. Whether outrageously contrived or enterprising, the strategy works and the all-stars of the pagan Otherworld featured in this episode join Patrick and the heroes of the *fían* as paradigms of generosity who are happy to give noble youths what they need in order to start their adult lives in fitting style. The sons of Lugaid Menn, soon after they commence their hunger-strike, are invited into the *síd*. As honoured guests and protégés, they are given an array of valuable prizes, including one of the best homes available in Ireland. They live happily ever after, returning to the immortal Tuatha Dé Danann when the time for their deaths arrives.

Ard Ruide, the fort they are given in which to reside for the rest of their lives, certainly does make a difference in the youths' fortunes, as do the other commodities the Tuatha Dé donate to their cause, including a vat that magically makes sweet-tasting mead out of anything poured into it, a cup that transforms even sea-water into wine, and their own Otherworldly musician to provide enchanting music. But what the text highlights, by placing it first, is the gift of spouses. This puts the youths on a solid footing and establishes a relationship of mutual assistance with the powerful, wealthy forces of the Otherworld. Midir, who – with his brother Bodb Derg – appears to be the preeminent member of the Tuatha Dé throughout *AS*, gives the sons of the high-king his own three daughters (one of whom is named Doirenn) and proclaims pointedly: 'For it is from wives that good or bad fortune is gotten'.[21]

Doirenn and her sisters, once offered by their father, are happily accepted by their husbands-to-be and with them comes good fortune. The girls' cousin Dairenn (daughter of Bodb Derg) brings her own magical cup and offers herself to Finn in the story Caílte tells about Ard in Fhostada, but she receives a dramatically different response. Finn, in refusing her offer, must feel sufficiently blessed with good fortune to avoid experimenting with obtaining even more or losing it all via the proposed union with this supernatural female. And yet, he is obligated, via the narrative device of the *geis*, to partake of her cup, the contents of which render the continuation of Finn's *acallam* with Dairenn or anyone else impossible. The heroic Finn, already precariously balanced between culture and nature and between this world and the Otherworld,[22] goes off the

21 Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 408–9: 'Ór is ó mhnáib do gabar rath nó amhrath'. **22** The 'liminality' of Finn and his fellow heroes in the *fían* is the subject of J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of*

deep-end, in effect stripping himself of his *rath* ('good fortune') and reputation by savagely alienating the members of his *fían*.

For a while, let us leave Finn in this predicament. The threat of social breakdown is a theme that carries over from the Ard in Fhostada episode into the next narrative embedded in the frame tale[23] – the longest of the framed tales included in *AS* and the one which, in its presentation, might be closest to how *fianaigecht* tales were told in the medieval Irish court or other social settings where they were welcome.[24] This story is, in fact, an account of a destructive civil war among the Tuatha Dé, waged primarily between the sons of Midir and Bodb Derg – the same branches of the extended family that were working so harmoniously together in the story of the sons of Lugaid Menn. Here, instead of being the victims of the dissolution of social bonds (as in the Ard in Fhostada episode), Finn and a few select companions, who are lured into the *síd* of Midir's sons and convinced to fight on their side, become the instruments of conflict-resolution and of the reunification of Tuatha Dé society. This success, however, does not come easily: Finn and his men spend a whole year under siege along with the sons of Midir, first fighting the forces of Bodb Derg and then recovering from their grievous wounds.

In the latter half of that year, seeking to kidnap an Otherworldly physician who is needed for the healing of his comrades' wounds, Caílte, wrapped in a cloak of invisibility lent to him by his *síd* allies, comes upon members of the *fían* and eavesdrops on their conversation. They are speaking about how much they miss Finn and their other lost colleagues, and how, if attempts to find them continue to prove fruitless, the remaining *fían* will have no choice but to disband. Adding to the surprising echoes of the *Odyssey*[25] that inform this story is the curious detail that the *fían*-warriors whose lament Caílte overhears are two of his sons and two of Finn's – it is as if Caílte were the returning incognito Odysseus encountering not one but four Telemachuses. Even more remarkable is the detail that Caílte comes upon the younger generation of *féinnidi* mourning the loss of their fathers at Ard in Fhostada. Appearing after the account of why the latter is so named, this extended story of absence, struggle, return and reunion (for both the Tuatha Dé and the *fían*) leaves us with a very different view of the collective life of the *fían* with Finn and a much more positive outcome to the jeopardizing of that life than does the preceding tale. Such subtle resonance among seemingly separate stories told in, or even out, of sequence in *AS* is characteristic of this text, to the extent that no story told here should

the outlaw (1985). **23** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5005–370. **24** On the diversity of those settings and of the audiences for *fianaigecht* see E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp lxxxvii–ci. **25** On the treatment of the story of the *Odyssey* in medieval Irish tradition see, for example, B. Hillers, '*In fer fiamach firglic*: Ulysses in medieval Irish literature', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 16/17 (2003), 15–38.

ever be evaluated by itself but as a participant in an ever-accumulating *acallam* among the various tales, including those that constitute the frame-tale itself.[26]

Let us return to Finn on the hill, suffering the devastating effects of the fury of a woman scorned and faced with the end of the *fían* as we know it. We would have to look long and hard in *AS* to find a situation in which Finn is so much at a loss, out of control and helpless in the face of disaster. Certainly, this Finn, who insults his men and drives them away, is a far cry from the portrait of an unfailingly magnanimous leader and template for gallant behavior that *AS* otherwise presents. A Finn who is robbed of his identity and 'not himself' does appear in a later medieval text, *Feis tighe Chonáin*,[27] and here again the predicament comes about on account of Finn spurning a supernatural lover. The latter, to punish Finn, draws him alone to a lake and asks him to fetch some lost jewellery from it. The waters of the lake turn him into an old man (this was the spurned lover's plan all along), and he barely manages to crawl out onto the lakeshore. When the *fían* (who have been looking for him) pass by, nobody recognizes their leader at first. In this story, however, as in the account of the naming of Ard in Fhostada in *AS*, Caílte ultimately saves the day. Being the only member of the *fían* whom the transformed Finn can convince of his identity, Caílte assures his comrades that the old geezer is telling the truth, and he spearheads the ultimately successful effort to force the Otherworld to restore Finn's good looks and proper age. It takes yet another magical drink in a special cup from the *síd* – but this one has only good effects, removing the disfiguring ravages of age and even conferring special wisdom upon Finn. As we would expect from this hero, after having taken a drink and tested it, he wants to share it with the other members of the *fían*. Unfortunately, after only a few others have the chance to partake, the cup leaps back into the subterranean *síd* whence it came.

As pathetic as the prematurely aged Finn of *Feis tighe Chonáin* might be, his intentions towards his men are benign, and he yearns to be accepted back into their company. The deranged Finn of the Ard in Fhostada episode of *AS*, on the other hand, out-performs even Conán, the worst troublemaker in Clann Morna, with whom Finn and his kinsmen maintain an uneasy truce that allows them all to co-exist within the *fían*. It is no wonder that Finn verges on suicidal after the effects of the drink wear off. Still, the episode is revealing of what it is that makes Finn's heroic reputation so powerful and enduring in Irish tradition. The episode, by showing what happens when Finn is not himself, defines clearly what he is and what he is supposed to do. The author of *AS*, attempting to distill the sum of *fianaigecht*, as it was known to him, and to transmit it to future generations, seems to be saying that Finn's heroic specialty, enshrined on

26 Succinctly demonstrated by G. Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 55 (2008), 11–39. **27** M. Joynt (ed.), *Feis tighe Chonáin* (1936), ll. 1141–330.

this hill, is *fostad*, the verbal noun of *ad-suidi* ('stops, holds back, detains, hinders').[28] As the leader of the *fían*, Finn retains, accumulates, restrains, supports, unifies and establishes the basis for his band of fellow heroes. He is the glue that holds the *fían* together and, in a more general sense, he evokes the social bond that underlies human institutions such as the family, kingship and marriage. It is no wonder, therefore, that it is an abiding and powerful fascination with Finn which unites figures situated so diversely on the cultural and historical continuum as Patrick, Caílte, Díarmait mac Cerbaill and the others who, in the course of *AS*, anachronistically become contemporaries.

The Finn who bad-mouths his *fían* turns out to be a bad dream that evaporates, his actions having been caused by magic and not deep-seated resentment. And yet, we catch a glimpse here of the dark side of the hero; every hero has one, distortedly mirroring what the hero does best and what makes him valuable to his society.[29] Elements of this story told in *AS* find their counterpart in the tragedy of Diarmaid and Gráinne, especially as recounted in *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, the early modern text detailing their pursuit.[30] Gráinne, though not a supernatural female, wreaks havoc by dispensing drink which does not drive Finn, her husband, mad but puts him to sleep, giving her the opportunity to force his trusted warrior and kinsman, Diarmaid, to elope with her. Much later in the story, instead of listening to his men, allowing genuine reconciliation to take place and healing the rift in the *fían*, Finn harbours his jealous hatred of Diarmaid and arranges for his death in a boar-hunt. The image of Finn letting the water in his hands (which could have healed the wounded Diarmaid) dribble out, not once but twice, echoes the maddened Finn of the Ard in Fhostada episode who repeatedly 'lets loose' at his men with what he knows – an anti-leader who is no longer capable of nurturing or maintaining the solidarity it was his heroic specialty to provide.

There is no one who can stop Finn from doing what he does to Diarmaid and from destroying the *fían* with his treacherous action. *AS*, however, assiduously ignores or knows nothing of Finn's role in Diarmaid's demise, although it acknowledges the latter's death and the grief it caused his fellow *féinnidi*.[31] Moreover, on the exceedingly rare occasion when Finn goes bad in *AS*, when he starts to behave like the sinister Finn of the Diarmaid and Gráinne story,[32] there is always someone else in the *fían* – such as Caílte – who counteracts the errant leader and restores the threatened equilibrium. As we have seen, it is Caílte, noted for his speed and agility, who does the 'retaining', the reconstituting of the *fían*, no less than twelve times within the Ard na Fhostada episode.

28 *DIL*, s.vv. **29** As in the contrast between the 'constructive' and 'destructive' sides of Cú Chulainn on display in his boyhood deeds (see above, n. 1). **30** N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967). **31** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1514–30. **32** See, for example, Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1334–61 (Finn plays favourites, dangerously, with the younger members of the *fían*, but Oisín wisely intervenes).

Complaining about the difficulty of the feat of putting the humpty-dumpty *fían* back together, Caílte compares it to the *corrimirge* ('odd herd/herding'), another of his accomplishments, which figures in a ballad, variants of which are preserved both in the Book of the Dean of Lismore and in *Duanaire Finn*.[33] There, Caílte is set the task of collecting a pair of every kind of wild animal that lives in Ireland and driving this menagerie before the ramparts of the fort of Cormac mac Airt, the high-king in Tara. The version of the story that *AS* implies it is following has Caílte accomplishing this task in order to free a seditious Finn from house-arrest in Tara.[34] Another version, attested in the earliest surviving text that refers to the *corrimirge*, claims the herding constituted the bride-price in Finn's wooing of Gráinne.[35] Although she is not said here to leave him for another man, Finn and Gráinne separate after they prove to be incompatible, staying together barely longer than the herd of wild animals itself (which Caílte releases as soon as he has shown it to Cormac). Again, the pattern of retention and dispersal is played out in a dispute between Finn and a female, and Caílte succeeds in holding together what Finn should be able to keep intact but, for one reason or another, cannot.

Surely, the matter of *AS* itself is the *piece de résistance* of Caílte, the swift-footed hunter-gatherer, insofar as the text brings together an audience, including Patrick, beings from the pagan Otherworld and legendary figures from different eras. Moreover, within *AS*, Caílte's extended act of storytelling not only retains *fianaigecht* narrative and poetry in its richness and variety but also rescues Finn, his heroic companions and Caílte himself from Patrician-era oblivion. There is even a restoration of the Tara *fían* under the auspices of Caílte who befriends the last descendant of Clann Morna and helps the young man demonstrate his worthiness to the high-king.[36] Even more strikingly, with a boost from evolving trends in Christian mores and perhaps also under the spell of encroaching romance and chivalry,[37] Caílte, Patrick and *AS* achieve major progress in negotiating a truce between men and women – a relationship that is deeply troubled and troubling for the *fían* in pre-Patrician times, as we have seen. Caílte even saves a pair of marriages in one episode, sharing aphrodisiacs with wives who are about to be abandoned by their husbands.[38] Elsewhere in *AS*, when he is urged by the saint to do so, Caílte pays damages to a supernatural female (yet another daughter of Bodb Derg) whom he jilted in his youth. She has the

33 N. Ross (ed.), *Heroic poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (1939), pp 40–58; Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, i, pp 19–21. **34** This version, including the incident of the attempted *coup d'état*, is told in full in *Agallamh na seanórach* (Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, iii, pp 67–83; also in Ross, *Heroic poetry*, pp 254–69). **35** K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), 'Finn and Gráinne', *Zeitshrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 458–61. **36** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1952–2026 and 2217–305. **37** See S.J. Arbuthnot, 'On the name Oscar and two little-known episodes involving the *fían*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 51 (2006), 67–81 at 79–80. **38** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 952–98.

last laugh, however, for she is still *óc ildelbach* ('young and beautiful'), while Caílte, Patrick observes, has become a *senóir*, a pathetic old man.[39]

Old men, especially aged veterans in the *fían*, can still do damage, especially when it comes to the relationship between the sexes. The story of Garad mac Morna and the women of the *fían*, as told in *AS*,[40] ominously suggests the danger of an old *féinnid* going berserk in response to female teasing. When, in disgust, Garad departs from the house of the women who had been entrusted to his care by the *fían*, lighting a fire and making sure that all the doors are closed, is he conscientiously avoiding more trouble? Or is this an anticipation of what Garad actually does do, according to other tellings of the story – namely, burn the house down with the women inside?[41] And, even when bringing disparate entities, groups or values together, the *senóir* ('senior') in a *fían* is not necessarily motivated by lofty intentions, just as not every *fían* featured in medieval Irish tradition subscribes to the values of the band of heroes depicted in *AS*. The medieval saga *Togail bruidne Da Derga*, which details the demise of the high-king Conaire at the hands of his foster-brothers (who form, in effect, a mini-*fían*), shows him committing a fatal mistake when he releases them into exile instead of executing them for their destructive behaviour. Conaire orders that the sons of Donn Désa are to leave in the company of elders ('eirced senóire leósom', 'triar fer cona senóraib leó').[42] Are these *senóire* the ones who subsequently negotiate with the British brigands and *their* seniors, thereby joining together disparate *fíana* into a weapon of mass destruction and achieving the critical mass of Conaire's own doom? Given what the benign *senóir* of the *fían* accomplishes in *AS*, there is no telling how many crises, threats to social order and breakdowns of narrative coherence might have accumulated under the orchestration of a more mischievously inclined *fían* elder …

39 Ibid., ll. 3893–909. **40** Ibid., ll. 1362–80. **41** E.J. Gwynn (ed. and trans.), 'The burning of Finn's house', *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 13–37. **42** E. Knott (ed.), *Togail bruidne Da Derga* (1936), ll. 217–18 and 221–2.

Some observations on the *Acallam bec*

Julia S. Kühns

One of the best-known medieval Irish texts is *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*).[1] This late Middle-Irish collection of tales centred around the mythological hero, Finn mac Cumaill, is the focus of ongoing scholarly research and has been the subject of numerous editions, books and articles.[2] Besides *AS*, there are two other texts on the same subject-matter which have received considerably less attention: these are *Agallamh na seanórach* (*AS* II) and the *Acallam bec* (*AB*). *AS* II was described, by Douglas Hyde in 1920, as 'a different Agallamh from any that were hitherto known'.[3] It has also been referred to as 'Agallamh Reeves' owing to the fact that Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 24 P 5 (93),[4] the manuscript containing the only extant copy, was once owned by Bishop Reeves. *AS* II was edited by Nessa Ní Shéaghdha;[5] there is, however, no translation and only a few articles are concerned specifically with this version.[6] As for *AB*, a complete edition is still wanting and this version is otherwise almost entirely neglected. The present essay seeks to provide a general introduction to *AB*, including a summary of the text with edited passages. One particular textual aspect will be considered in more detail: the role of St Patrick and the theme of baptism in *AB* as compared to *AS* and *AS* II.

The only extant copies of *AB* are contained in the fifteenth-century Book of Lismore, also known as *Leabhar Mhic Carthaigh Riabhaigh* after Fínghin Mac Carthaigh Riabhach (†1505) of Cairbre in Co. Cork, patron of one of the scribes.[7] In the Book of Lismore, we find two copies of *AB*. The first, consist-

1 This article is based on J.S. Kühns, 'An edition and translation of the *Agallamh bheag* from the Book of Lismore' (2006). **2** For editions and (partial) translations of *AS* see S.H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols (1892), i, pp 92–233, and ii, pp 101–285; W. Stokes, '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438; A. Dooley & H. Roe, *Tales of the elders of Ireland* (1999). Recent discussions of various aspects of *AS* include N. Ó Muraíle, '*Agallamh na seanórach*' in P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Fhiannaíocht* (1995), pp 96–127; A. Dooley, 'The date and purpose of *Acallam na senórach*', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 97–126; G. Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 55 (2008), 11–39. **3** 'The Reeves manuscript of the *Agallamh na senorach*', *Revue celtique*, 38 (1920), 289–95 at 290. **4** T.F. O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, 28 fasc. (1926–70), iii, pp 275–7. **5** *Agallamh na seanórach*, 3 vols (1942–5). **6** Articles concerned specifically with *AS* II include Hyde, 'The Reeves manuscript'; S.J. Arbuthnot, 'On the name Oscar and two little-known episodes involving the *fían*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 51 (2006), 67–81; eadem, 'Medieval etymology, knives, Scone and Skene', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 23 (2007), 1–20. **7** B. Ó Cuív, 'Observations on the Book of Lismore', *Proceedings*

ing of only the beginning of the tale, occupies fo. 134va1–b13.[8] This fragment of *AB* has been inserted into the middle of another tale, namely, 'The colloquy of Cenn Fáelad and Fintan', which starts on fo. 134rb36. This text resumes after the fragment of *AB* breaks off. Except for occasional departures in spelling and in contractions, the two beginnings of our text are identical. It would seem, then, that both copies were made from the same exemplar. The complete text of *AB* occupies fos. 194ra1–200vb24. While there is no evidence that the text is imperfect, it is worth noting that the story ends rather abruptly. This could suggest that an exemplar manuscript was lacking some text or that the copyist of the Book of Lismore omitted the end for one reason or another. That the ending of *AB* may be defective is interesting in the context of *AS* and *AS* II. As noted by Geraldine Parsons, 'the five manuscript witnesses to [*AS*] each finally break off at different points and none of these end-points represent a satisfactory conclusion of the text'.[9] *AS* II, as it stands in RIA MS 24 P 5, also breaks off unfinished. Gerard Murphy proposed that the ending of the *Acallam* might have 'described how Caílte and Oisín, both previously baptized by Patrick, departed from this world at the festival known as *Feis Temrach* (the feast of Tara)'.[10] At this stage, it is perhaps worth noting also that the name by which our version of the tale has come to be known does not actually occur anywhere in the narrative or in the manuscript. Rather, the text was first referred to by this name in 1870, in an article by W.M. Hennessy who made mention of 'the tract called the *Agallamh beg*, or "Little Dialogue", contained in the "*Book of Lismore*"'.[11]

Although no complete or up-to-date edition of *AB* has been published thus far, the first third of the text was edited and published by An Craoibhín (Douglas Hyde) with a transliteration into modern Irish.[12] An English translation of Hyde's incomplete edition appeared a few years later.[13] In addition, four of the fourteen poems that can be found in *AB* were edited and published in the early twentieth century. Specifically, these are an edition of the poem beginning 'Dámh trir thancatar ille',[14] editions and translations of the poems 'Fulachtt na Morrighna

of the Royal Irish Academy, 83C (1983), 269–92 at 269; C. Breatnach, 'Lismore, Book of' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland* (2005), p. 279. Copies of *AB* can also be found in transcripts of the Book of Lismore such as RIA MS 23 H 6, a nineteenth-century transcript by Joseph Ó Longáin. See O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts*, x, pp 1278–84. **8** Throughout this article references to the folio numbers of the Book of Lismore have been made using the numbers printed in the top right-hand corner of the manuscript facsimile. See Irish Manuscripts Commission, *The Book of Mac Carthaigh Riabhach, otherwise the Book of Lismore* (1950). **9** 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', 12. **10** '*Acallam na senórach*' in M. Dillon (ed.), *Irish sagas* (1968), pp 119–34 at p. 133. I examine the actual ending of *AB* in more detail below. **11** 'The ancient Irish goddess of war', *Revue celtique*, 1 (1870), 32–57 at 54. **12** '*An agallamh bheag*', *Lía Fáil*, 1 (1924), 79–107. **13** W. Pennington, 'The little colloquy', *Philological Quarterly*, 9 (1930), 97–110. **14** L.Chr. Stern, review of *Festschrift Whitley Stokes zum 70. Geburtstage am 28. Februar 1900 gewidmet* (1900) in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 3

anall' and 'Deichin do-rin Bir Deichin' and of the passages of prose narrative that immediately precede them,[15] and an edition and translation of 'Cuncha [sic], cnoc os cionn Life', again including the surrounding prose passages.[16]

Before moving on to a summary and discussion of some textual aspects of *AB*, it may be useful to consider briefly the metadata of our text and of its two counterparts, *AS* and *AS* II. The 'vital statistics' of all three texts were assembled by Nollaig Ó Muraíle as follows:[17]

	AB	*AS*	*AS* II
Total words (approx.)	12,500	70,000	104,000
• words prose	6,500	55,000	73,000
• words poetry	6,000	15,000	31,000
No. of poems	14	164	122
Shortest poem (no. of stanzas)	1	1	1
Longest poem (no. of stanzas)	76	49	146

Table 1: 'Vital statistics' of *AB*, *AS* and *AS* II (following Ó Muraíle)

AS is thought to date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, the issue of its dating and historical context having been discussed most recently by Ann Dooley.[18] *AS* II has been dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.[19] It is generally thought that *AB* is roughly contemporary with *AS*, although the former 'is probably to be dated a little later'.[20] It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide a detailed linguistic analysis of *AB*, but even the most preliminary examination reveals a high number of features associated with late Middle and Early Modern Irish. We may note, for example, analogical *s*-preterite verbal forms, such as third person singular *tangais*,[21] and an instance of *lenfait siat*,[22] a third person plural synthetic form followed by the third plural independent subject pronoun. To these late forms, we may add *ro muinit*,[23] a third person plural present indicative form with preverbal *ro-*, and *do mhill sind*,[24] a construction showing evidence of the first person plural independent object pronoun. Of course, as with any text of a similar period, certain dating issues have to be taken into account. Earlier features may have been inherited from source-texts, rather than being contemporary with the time of compilation, or may constitute deliberate archaism. Similarly, later features may be owing to scribal updating.

(1901), 432–4. **15** D. Hyde (ed. and trans.), 'The cooking of the Great Queen (*Fulacht na Mórrigna*)', *Celtic Review*, 10 (1914–16), 335–50. **16** M. Power (ed. and trans.), 'Cnucha cnoc os cionn Life', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 11 (1917), 39–55. **17** '*Agallamh na seanórach*', p. 104. **18** 'The date and purpose'. **19** Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, i, pp xxiv–xxxi. **20** Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, p. xxxi. See also Ó Muraíle, '*Agallamh na seanórach*', p. 108. **21** Fo. 195va17. **22** Fo. 196va6. **23** Fo. 197rb43. **24** Fo. 196va42.

Edited passages in the following account of the narrative of *AB* are essentially diplomatic in character. The division of words and of the text into sentences and paragraphs, as well as punctuation and capitalization, follow normal editorial practice. Italics indicate the expansion of contractions and suspensions. Expansion of marks of lenition is also indicated by the use of italics. Lenition is shown only where this occurs in the manuscript. The punctum delens over *f* and *s* has been retained. Length-marks are shown only where they occur in the manuscript and have been silently restored to their proper position, where necessary. Chevrons indicate instances where the manuscript is illegible. In the translation, standardized spellings of the names of persons and places have been adopted. In addition, the narrative present in Irish is rendered by past in the English.

Narrative summary of AB

As the statistics in Table 1 above illustrate, *AB* is by far the shortest of the three texts under consideration and consists of almost equal parts of prose narrative and poetry. The tale begins by relating how, at the time when Patrick came to Ireland, all that remained of the *fían* were Caílte, Oisín and three groups of nine men. One day, when they are out in the wild, one of the servants sees, from behind the shelter of a branch, an extraordinary group:

> Ba sead*h* a tu*arus*cb*ail*: casla cao*mh*a coi*mgh*eala lín umpu, ci*n*d tolla leó 7 c*r*oind c*hr*o*m*a i*n*a la*mhaibh*, 7 scéit*h* tiug*h*a ecru*th*a óir 7 *ar*gait ei*n*gil f*or* a n-o*cht*aib*h* doib*h*. Aig*hth*e bana att*r*uag*h*a ban*n*da leo 7 got*h*a f*e*rr*dh*a accu, fod*h*ord *con*uire g*ach* aoi*nfh*ir d*h*ibh.[25]
>
> This is a description of them: fine, very bright cloaks of linen around them, their heads pierced (i.e., tonsured) and crooked sticks in their hands, and thick, ornamented shields of gold and pure-white silver on their chests. They had white, pitiful, womanly faces and manly voices, and each one of them rendering the *fodord conaire*.[26]

On hearing about these figures, whose coming had been prophesied by Finn, the *fían* split up and Caílte and Oisín go their separate ways:

> Is an*n* sin t*r*a ro scails*e*t na t*r*i noe*n*b*hair* bad*ar* a n-oe*n*m*a*d roim*h*e si*n* .i. noe*n*b*ar* dib*h* u*m* C*h*ailti fa *fh*ed*h*aib*h* 7 fa d*r*oib*h*el*aibh* 7 aimreid*h*ib*h* Ere*nn*, 7 nónb*ar* aile fa s*híghaibh* Eir*enn ar* teith*edh* na Tailgi*n*d, 7 in t*r*es nónb*ar* fa Oisi*n* féin .i. Aod*h* Bec 7 Ceall*ach* 7 Lug*aidh*, Colma*n* Cend, Co*mr*a*mh*a*ch*, Siadail file, Flan*n* m*ac* B*r*áin, Aod*h*an m*ac* Airc*h*eall*aigh*.

25 Fo. 194va22–5. Translations throughout this article are my own. **26** See *DIL*, s.vv. 1 *dord* and *fodord*, for examples of these terms used to refer to some kind of chant or refrain.

> Is an*n* si*n* do raid*h* Cail*te*: 'In side f*e*rge b*e*res Oisi*n* do m*a*rb*adh* na Tailc*he*nd, brecf*ai*ter he, 7 c*r*eidfid*h* fo ma*m* baistid 7 c*r*eidme. Ca*ch* aon t*r*a do n*ach* áil c*r*eidem*h* doib*h* na heirg*ea*d da n-i*n*dsaig*h*i, 7 m*a*d misi im*orro* ní rag*h*.' O*cus* nír co*m*ruicse*t* int ṡei*nfh*i*an* i*ar* sin *acht* Cail*te* 7 Oisi*n* i tig*h* Di*a*rm*a*da mic C*e*rb*h*uill i Tem*hr*aig*h*.
>
> As a hait*h*le si*n* ro raid*h* Cail*te*: 'Ní reac*h*a*m*,' *ar* sé, 'a sid*h*aib*h* *acht* rac*h*mait fo *fh*ed*h*aib*h* 7 fo ai*m*reid*h*ib*h* Ere*n*n *ar* teith*e*d*h* na Tailc*he*n*n*.'[27]
>
> It was then that the three groups of nine, who had been in the same place before then, dispersed, i.e., nine of them around Caílte [went] into the woods and the difficult grounds and the rough places of Ireland, and another group of nine [went] into the Otherworld of Ireland in flight from the Adze-heads,[28] and the third group of nine [was] around Oisín himself, i.e., Áed Bec and Cellach and Lugaid, Colmán Cenn, Comramach, Síadail the poet, Flann mac Bráin, Áedán mac Airchellaig.
>
> Then Caílte said: 'The rush of anger that drives Oisín to kill the Adze-heads will be diverted, and he will believe under the yoke of baptism and faith. Each one of them, then, who does not wish to believe, let him not rise up towards them, and as for myself, I shall not go.' And the old *fian*-band did not meet after that except for Caílte and Oisín in the house of Díarmait mac Cerbaill in Tara.
>
> After that, Caílte said: 'We shall not go,' he said, 'to the Otherworld but we shall go about the woods and the rough places of Ireland in flight from the Adze-heads.'

From this point on, the narrative exclusively follows Caílte and his retinue as they travel around Ireland. The first few days after the parting from the larger *fian*-group is taken up by moving from resting-place to resting-place, interspersed with descriptions of cooking. The men are conscious to choose remote locations to set up camp:

> 'Ni hinad*h* dui*n*d so, *ar* is i*m*d*h*a a ait*r*eab*h*a i*n* inaid so. A i*m*gab*h*ail is coir d*h*ui*n*d.'[29]
>
> 'This is not the place for us, because there are many houses in this place. It is right for us to avoid it.'
>
> 'Is inad mait*h* seo,' *ar* se, Caíl*te*, '*ocus* is dia*mhair* é 7 ní *conair* at*h*aig*hth*i ó t*hí*r, *acht* mi*n*a t*hí*sat luc*ht* fiad*h*aig*h*.'[30]

27 Fo. 194va26–37. **28** 'Adze-head' refers to the tonsure style. See further D. McCarthy, 'On the shape of the insular tonsure', *Celtica*, 24 (2003), 140–67. **29** Fo. 195ra6–7. **30** Fo. 195ra17–18.

> 'This is a good place,' said he, Caílte, 'and it is hidden and not a path accessible from land, unless huntsmen come.'

However, despite their efforts, there are frequent interactions and encounters on their journey which form separate episodes in the narrative. Thus, they meet Irgal mac Muiredaig who requests their help in defeating the man with whom he shares the kingship over his territory. Irgal receives a charm and achieves his goal. However, his wife, who spies on her husband and finds out about the spells he receives, curses the members of the *fían* and, on running away from them, falls from a cliff and dies. The warriors move on with a renewed endeavour for a solitary life:

> '*Ocus* na tic*edh* nea*ch* *ch*ucai*n*d t*ar* éis Irg*h*al*a*.' Gab*h*aitt fon g*h*len*n* 7 do-g*h*eib*h*it inad*h* diam*hair* f*or* bru*in*d essa, 7 do-rindset bot*h* *ch*uann*a* 7 ro c*h*uirse*t* fleisc re féici d*h*i 7 dlaí d*h*ídi*n* t*air*si … Bát*ar* isi*n* glend si*n* re bl*iadhain* can nea*ch* d'f*eraibh* Eir*enn* do urmaisi*n* f*or*ro.[31]
>
> 'And do not let anyone come to us after Irgal,' [they said]. They went about the glen and they found a secluded spot on the edge of a waterfall, and they made a fine hut and they put a rod as a ridge-pole for it and a thatch across it … They were in that glen for a year and none of the men of Ireland came upon them.

After that year, huntsmen find their way into the glen and the warriors decide to leave. They come across Ráithín na nIngnad, and Caílte relates, in the poem beginning 'Dámh trir thancatar ille', the story of how Finn met new companions in possession of a dog with magical qualities at this place.[32] At their next camp, near Fulacht na Morrígna (the name of which Caílte explains to his companions in a poem), they have some unwelcome visitors. These are the three daughters of Bodb whose brother had been killed by Conán mac Morna and who now seek revenge. The women transform into wild pigs and the *fían*, while hunting them, become separated:

> 'A Fi*n*dch*aidh*,' *ar* Cail*te*, 'ní faca*mar* *ar* mui*n*dt*ir* seo*ch* Cen*n* M*h*aig*h*i Drai*gh*en.' *Ocus* i*m*páit d'íarr*aidh* a mui*n*dt*ir*i, 7 iss é c*e*tf*er* t*h*arr*l*a dóib*h* Corm*ac* m*ac* Ruaid*h*, 7 a aig*h*id*h* re l*ár* 7 sceit*h* f*h*ola i*n*a bhfiad*h*naise. 'A C*h*orm*aic*,' *ar* Cail*te*, 'ní slan atat*har* an*n*.' 'Ní h*eadh*,' *ar* Corm*ac*, 't*r*i hi*ngi*n*a* Buidb*h* do m*h*ill si*n*d a n-íc F*h*erdo*mh*ai*n* do t*h*uit le *Con*án m*ac* Mor*n*a.' 'Tabraid*h* mo s*h*ait*h* uisci dam*h*,' *ar* Corm*ac*. *Ocus* tuc Cail*ti* lán i*n* *ch*uai*ch* dó 7 sc*a*rais a anu*m* re <a chorp> 7 marb*h* a seis*er* iat 7 a d*h*a gcoi*n* déc, 7 ro *charmnsa*t cloc*h*a i*n* m*h*aig*h*i forro. *Con*ad C*arnnmhagh* ó sin ille ain*m* i*n* m*h*aig*h*i si*n*.[33]

31 Fos. 195va43–b12. **32** Fo. 195vb33–196ra32. **33** Fo. 196va38–b2.

> 'Finnchad,' said Caílte, 'we have not seen our followers since Cenn Maige Draigen.' And they turned to search for their followers, and the first man whom they came upon was Cormac mac Rúaid, and his face [was] towards the ground and [he was] spurting blood in their presence. 'Cormac,' said Caílte, 'those who are here are not healthy.' 'No,' said Cormac, 'the three daughters of Bodb have destroyed us in retribution for Ferdoman who fell by Conán mac Morna.' 'Give my fill of water to me,' said Cormac. And Caílte gave him all that was in the cup and his soul parted from his body and (all?) six of them died with their twelve dogs, and they heaped up the rocks of the plain on them. That is why Carnmag since then is the name of that plain.

Caílte and Finnchad continue on their own, remarking on sites of interest on the way. Again, they encounter Patrick and his retinue from afar:

> Is and at-*conn*cad*ar* na heissi coi*m*geala 7 na buid*h*ne romora 7 na heac*hr*ada. At-be*r*t Cail*te* re Fi*n*dch*adh*: 'Tab*hair* t'ag*h*aid*h* fr*i*a l*ár* 7 iss iatt so na Táilci*n*d.'[34]
>
> It was there that they saw the very bright troops and the great hosts and the steeds. Caílte said to Finnchad: 'Put your face to the ground; these are the Adze-heads.'

A few days later, a face-to-face meeting takes place between the *fían* and the saint when Patrick, who happens upon the sleeping warriors, baptizes them. While still in Patrick's camp, the king of Leinster and his poet approach Caílte and Finnchad, their question leading up to what, at seventy-six stanzas, is the longest poem in *AB*:

> 'Cid*h* ima n-ab*ar* Curr*ach* Life do*n* mag*h* réid*h* seo?' *ar* Dub*htach*. 'Ni *hansa*,' or Cail*te*, 'Curr*ach* m*a*c Cat*hair* ro m*a*r*badh* le Fi*n*d and, 7 misi do ben a c*h*eann de 7 ruc*us* liu*m* si*ar* co Bad*h*am*air*.' *Ocus* ro *fh*i*arfaigh*: 'In bhfuil uaib*h* neac*h* no *fh*i*n*dfad*h* saog*hal* Fi*n*d?' *Ocus* it-be*r*t:
>
> In bhfuil uaib aderat fr*iu*m
> ca saog*hal* do-rat*a*d d'F*hi*n*d*?[35]
>
> 'Why is the smooth plain here called Currach Life?' said Dubthach. 'Not difficult,' said Caílte, 'Currach mac Cathaír was killed by Finn there, and it was I who struck his head off and I took [it] west with me to Badamair.' And he asked: 'Is there anyone of you who would know how long Finn lived?' And he said:
>
> Are there any of you who can tell me
> how long Finn lived?

34 Fo. 197ra20–2. **35** Fo. 197va6–11.

The next place Caílte and Finnchad come to, Ard na hAlmaine, is also elaborated on in verse, as it is the place where Finn was born. The warriors move on and, after settling down at their next campsite, Caílte goes hunting, leaving Finnchad behind. Caílte, however, is ambushed by three phantoms – the children of Colmán Corrguinech whom Caílte had killed. They challenge the warrior, but he is mindful of his recent baptism:

> 'Is é so,' *ar* siat, 'intí ro m*har*b*h ar* n-at*hair*-ne. *Ocus* tabrum uat*h*bás ui*m*e 7 na leice*m* co*m*rac dó re *fh*er cu*mth*a.' Ro d*h*ealbs*a*t na cat*h*a c*r*od*h*a i*n*a ti*m*ceall co raib*h* cat*h* [recte: cach] dibh ac m*a*rbad*h* a c*h*eile. At-*connairc* Cail*ti* si*n* 7 is *eadh* ro ráid*h*: 'It-be*r*t Patraic riu*m*-sa gan dui*n*e m*har*b*adh* do denu*m* 7 gan b*eith* a bhfiad*h*nu*s*e *fh*ola do t*hin*dsatai*n*.'[36]
>
> 'This is him,' said they, 'the one who killed our father. And let us terrorize him and not allow him to meet with his companion.' They conjured up bloody battalions around him so that each of them was killing each other. Caílte saw that and this is what he said: 'Patrick said to me not to kill anyone and not to be in the presence of blood being shed.'

While this happens to Caílte, Finnchad is alone in their camp. When a hunting-party comes by, he goes with them. When Caílte returns, he finds his companion gone but, knowing that they are in Finnchad's native territory, Caílte decides not to search for him. He remains on his own at Daire int Ṡeineoin for three years, until Díarmait mac Cerbaill takes the kingship of Ireland. By chance, Caílte is discovered by the sons of a hospitaller who had turned to plundering and raiding when their land had been taken from them by the king of Meath after their father's death. They live with Caílte for three months until Díarmait calls them to him to make peace. Caílte refuses the sons' offer of going home with them but decides to go to the fort of his sister instead. The sons of the hospitaller accompany him for part of the way.

> Tancat*ar* co Cunc*h*a 7 tancat*ar* lu*cht* na c*r*ic*h*e 7 a n-aos ciúil 7 a rig*h*a 7 a *fh*lait*h*i da n-i*n*dsaid*h*i le hi*n*gant*us* in *fh*ir m*h*oir leo. Ro g*abh*sat*ar* i*mch*om*h*ar*c* 7 *ar fh*i*ar*faid*h*i scel de: 'Cid*h a*ra bhfuil Cunc*h*a *ar* i*n* inad*h* so?' *ocus* 'I*n* an*n* so tuc*a*d cat*h* Cunc*h*a?' *ocus* 'Caid*h*i ais F*hin*d i*n* tan tuc*adh* i*n* cat*h* si*n*?' o*cus* 'Ca m*h*ét rig*h* tarr*ngair* Fi*n*d *ar* Eir*inn*?' *ocus* 'Cía ro roi*n*d Ére re Con*n*?'. 'Léicid*h* suid*h*i d*h*amh,' *ar* sé, 7 do-roi*n*e i*n* láid*h*:
>
> Cunc*h*a, cnoc os ci*n*d Life,
> ro boí u*air* ba h*air*it*h*e.[37]
>
> They came to Cuncha and the people of the territory and their musicians and their kings and their lords came towards them with wonder for

36 Fo. 198va24–9. **37** Fo. 199ra13–20.

> the great man in their company. They began questioning and asking news of him: 'Why is this place called Cuncha?' and 'It is here that the battle of Cuncha was given?' and 'What age was Finn when that battle was fought?' and 'How many kings did Finn prophesy over Ireland?' and 'Who divided Ireland with Conn?'. 'Let me sit down,' he said, and he made the lay:
>
> Cuncha, a hill above Life,
> there was a time when it was special.

Caílte then arrives at the house of his sister where he stays for a year. But he misses his companions, laments this in verse and, when the time comes, refuses to go to Oenach Tailten, although everyone thinks it would be fitting for him to be at Tara. Díarmait mac Cerbaill finally goes himself to convince Caílte, this time with success. Caílte is taken to Tara and remains there for three years. After a poem, spoken by Caílte, in which he laments old age and remembers his fellow *féinnidi*, the narrative ends rather abruptly:

> Ro boi tra Cail*te* i Tem*hraigh* am*hlaidh* si*n* co torr*acht* Oisi*n* hi ci*n*d t*r*ill 7 p*r*oi*n*d c*h*oacat ca*ch* lait*h*e do.[38]
>
> Caílte was then in Tara like that until Oisín arrived after a while and a meal for fifty [was given] to him every day.

The scene of baptism in AB

As noted by Máire Ní Mhaonaigh with regard to *AS*, 'the theme of baptism is … pivotal to the work'.[39] This observation makes analysis of the corresponding theme in *AB* a desideratum. In *AB*, the baptism scene constitutes the only meeting between Caílte and Patrick and, in fact, the only episode in *AB* in which Patrick appears and has direct dealings with the *féinnidi*. In the overall narrative of *AB*, Patrick's name only occurs fourteen times; of these ten mentions are within the baptism episode. In the section in question, the text describes the (involuntary) meeting of Caílte with the saint and the subsequent baptism of the *féinnidi*. As can be seen from the summary above, in *AB* the group of warriors around Caílte deliberately turns away from where they first see the Adze-heads, trying to avoid a meeting. When they finally do meet, this is a chance encounter:

> Oc*us* do c*h*otailse*t* i*n*d oid*hch*i si*n* a*n*n si*n*. Is é in la sai*n* t*arr*la do Patraic toig*hacht* c*us* an maig*h*in si*n* *ar* tuc rí Laig*h*en in baile do Patraic. Táinic Patraic *con*a m*h*ui*n*dt*ir* g*us* an coilli*n* ut i rrab*h*ad*ar* so*n* i*n*a cotlad*h*. At-

38 Fo. 200vb23–4. **39** 'Pagans and holy men: literary manifestations of twelfth-century reform' in D. Bracken & D. Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century* (2006), pp 143–61 at p. 152.

> *ch*ualad*ar* na cleir*igh* ruc*h*tac*h* 7 s*r*andg*h*al na bf*er* mor, 7 teic*h*it na cleir*igh* co rancat*ar* co Patraic, 7 tic Patraic da n-i*n*dsaid*h*i, 7 coisrec*us* iat i*n*a cotlad*h*, 7 bidgait asa gcotl*adh*.
>
> 'A s*h*enorc*h*a uaisle,' *ar* Patraic, 'ticid*h* ó d*h*iabal 7 o ad*h*rad*h* arr*acht* co hadrad Dé, at*har* uile-cu*macht*aig*h*.'
>
> Ro baisted*h* i*ar* si*n* i *n*d-ain*m* na T*r*inóiti Caíl*te* 7 Fi*n*dch*adh* [7] Cri*mth*a*n* mac Énn*a* C*h*ei*n*dseal*aigh*.
>
> 'Tuc damsa,' *ar* Patraic, 'i*n* baile seo.' *Ocus* saig*h*t*er* pupall Patraic i*n*a timcell co cen*n* t*r*i lá t*r*i n-oid*h*ci, *con*id i si*n* Cill Usaile aniú.[40]

> And they slept that night there. That was the day that Patrick happened to come to that plain because the king of Laigin had given the place to Patrick. Patrick came with his followers to that little wood where they were sleeping. The clerics heard the groaning and snoring of the great men, and the clerics fled until they reached Patrick, and Patrick came towards them, and he blessed them in their sleep, and they jumped up out of their sleep.[41]
>
> 'Noble elders,' said Patrick, 'come from the devil and from the worship of idols to the worship of God, the almighty father.'
>
> Caílte and Finnchad and Crimthann mac Énna Cheinnselaig were baptized after that in the name of the Trinity.
>
> 'Give me,' said Patrick, 'this place.' And the tent of Patrick was erected around them until the end of three days and three nights, so that it is Cill Úsaile today.

The baptism happens twice, or at least in two parts: first in the form of a involuntary blessing when the *féinnidi* are asleep and again when Caílte, Finnchad and Crimthann are awake, and we can assume that they have given their consent. When the warriors and the saint part after this encounter, Patrick does not appear again in *AB*. He is, however, mentioned twice more: once when Caílte states that he was told by the saint not to kill people and not to be in the presence of blood being shed,[42] and once when Patrick is mentioned in passing in a poem.[43] In a way, then, the meeting of Patrick and the *féinnidi* constitutes just another one of the short episodes that make up the narrative of *AB*. There does not seem to be a lasting impression left by the saint and the baptism scene could well be omitted from *AB* without necessitating any change to the following narrative.

40 Fo. 197rb22–35. **41** This suggests that, in blessing the *fían*, Patrick sprinkled them with water. **42** See above, 129. **43** Fo. 199vb2 (part of the poem beginning 'Cuncha, cnoc os cind Life'): 'Fer f*or* a deic*h* d*h*uin*d* da n-éis | níro leic Issa *ar* aineis | sinde, fa c*r*eid*em*, cen c*h*ol, | do P*h*atraic i*n*a nao*mhth*or' ('Eleven men of us after them, | Jesus did not allow us [to go] into decline; | believing, without sin, | in Patrick as holy leader'). Cf. Power, 'Cnucha cnoc os cionn Life', 44 and 50.

In *AS*, as in *AB*, it is the case that a baptism – or, more precisely, an 'unsolicited pseudo-baptism'[44] – happens at the first meeting of Patrick and the *féinnidi*:

> Is ann sin do bhói Pátraic ac cantain na canóine coimdheta, 7 ic etarmholadh in Dúilemhun, 7 ic bendach*adh* na rátha a roibhe Find mac Cumaill .i. Ráith Droma Deirc. *Ocus* atconncatar na cléiri*igh* dá n-indsaighi iatsum, 7 ro ghabh grain 7 eagla iat roimh na feraibh móra cona conaibh móra lei, uair nír' lucht coimhré na comhaimsire dóibh iatt.
>
> Is and sin do éir*igh* in t-éo flaithemhais 7 in t-uaithne airechais 7 in t-aingil tail*maide* .i. Pátr*aic* mac Alpr*ainn* .i. apstal na nGaoidhel, 7 gabhus in tesríat do chroth*ad* uisci choisrictha ar na feraibh móra, uair ro bhúi mile léighionn do dheamhnaibh uas a cennaibh conuic in lá sin … 'Atchuinghidh dob áil liumsa d'iarr*aid* ortt, a Cháilti,' ar Pátraic. 'Dá rabh ocumsa do ni*u*rt *nó* do chumung sin do ghébthar,' ar Cáil*te*; 'oc*us* abair cidh edh hí.' 'Tobar fíruisci d'Ḟagbáil inar bḞocus annso, assa Ḟétfamáis tuatha Breagh 7 Midhi Uisnigh do baistedh,' ar Pátraic. 'Atá ocumsa dhuitsi sin, a ussail 7 a Ḟíreoin!' ar Cáil*te*.[45]
>
> Then Patrick was chanting the service of the Lord and praising the Creator and blessing the fortress where Finn mac Cumaill had been, i.e., Ráith Droma Deirc. And the clerics saw them [coming] towards them, and they were horrified and afraid of the big men with their big dogs, for they were not people of the same period or time as them.
>
> Then the salmon of heaven and the pillar of dignity and the angel on earth, i.e., Pátraic mac Alprainn, i.e., the apostle of the Gaels, arose and took the aspergillum to sprinkle holy water on the big men, for a thousand legions of demons had been above their heads until that day … 'There is a request I would like to ask of you, Caílte,' said Patrick. Caílte said, 'if I have enough strength or power, it will be granted. Say what it is.' Patrick said, 'to find a well of pure water near us here out of which we might baptize the peoples of Brega and Mide and Uisnech.' 'I have that for you, noble and righteous one!' said Caílte.[46]

At a later point in the narrative of *AS*, 'baptism proper ensues and the sacrament resurfaces at various points throughout the narrative, the search for water for its implementation being a common motif':[47]

> Is and sin docuas ó Pátraic arcenn C*áilti*, 7 tucadh dá innsaigid hé in nón-b*ar* ócla*ech* do bí, 7 ba hiat so a n-anmunna .i. Failbhe mac Flainn, 7 Eog*an*

44 Parsons, 'The structure of *Acallam na senórach*', 30. **45** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 58–84. **46** For an alternative translation see Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, p. 5. **47** Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Pagans and holy men', p. 152.

Airmderg m*ac* rígh Ul*ad*, 7 Flann m*ac* F*ergu*sa, mac ríg Cenéil *Con*aill, 7 Conall Coscarach *mac* Aengusa, mac rígh Connacht, 7 Scannlán mac Ai*le*lla mac ríg Osr*aigi*, 7 Baedán mac Gairb, mac ríg Corco-Duibne, 7 Luaimnech [mac] Linn, mac ríg Érna Mum*an*, 7 Aedh Lethderg mac Eog*ain*, mac rig Tuadhmhum*an*, 7 Failbe 7 Uancenn dá mac rig Dháil nAraidhi atuaidh, 7 Fulartach mac Finghin, mac rígh tuath mBreg 7 Midhi.

'(In) bḟedub*air* cidh fa tucad dom acall*aim* sib don (chu)r so?' ar Pátraic. 'Ní ḟedumar *immorro*,' ar Cáilte. 'Ar dáigh cu ro śléchtadh sibh do soiscéla rígh nime 7 talm*an* .i. in fírDia forórda.' Is ann sin tucad tonn baitsi 7 Críst tairsíbh ac Pátraic, ag cinn baitse creidme bhfer n-Eir*enn*. Is ann sin tuc Cáilte a láimh secha i comhraid a scéith, 7 tucustar lia druimnech dergóir [don ór órlasrach tíri na hAraipi] a rabutar trí cóe*cait* uingi, do Pátraic ar baisted in nónb*air* do bhí.[48]

Then people went from Patrick to seek Caílte, and he was brought to him [along with] the band of nine men who were [with him] and these were their names: Faílbe mac Flainn, and Eogan Armderg, the son of the king of Ulaid, and Flann mac Fergusa, the son of the king of Cenél Conaill, and Conall Coscarach mac Óengusa, the son of the king of Connachta, and Scannlán mac Ailella, the son of the king of Osraige, and Baetán mac Gairb, the son of the king of Corcu Duibne, and Luaimnech mac Linn, the son of the king of Érainn Muman, and Áed Lethderg mac Eogain, the son of the king of Túathmumu, and Faílbe and Úanchenn, the two sons of the king of Dál nAraide in the north, and Fulartach mac Fíngin, the son of the king of the peoples of Brega and Mide.

'Do you know why you have been brought by this warrior to speak with me?' asked Patrick. 'Indeed we do not,' said Caílte. 'So that you might submit to the Gospel of the king of heaven and earth, i.e., the true and glorious God.' Thereupon, Patrick, the head of baptism and faith of the men of Ireland, poured on them the waters of the baptism of Christ. Caílte put his hand to the rim of his shield and gave Patrick, in payment for baptizing the nine who were there, an embossed stone of red gold, of the gold-flaming gold of the land of Arabia, weighing one hundred and fifty ounces.[49]

We can detect some overlaps in the descriptions of the baptism in *AB* and in *AS*: in both texts there is a double baptism, the first being involuntary on the part of the *féinnidi*. In *AB*, however, both baptisms are clumped together to

48 Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 304–18. **49** For an alternative translation see Dooley & Roe, *Tales of the elders*, pp 11–12.

form one short episode, while in *AS* a number of episodes lie between the two baptisms and the saint features heavily throughout the narrative. Interesting also is the fact that, in *AS*, it is Caílte and the entire band of warriors around him who are baptized, yet only Caílte, Finnchad and Crimthann are baptized in *AB*. In further contrast to the situation in *AS*, no mention is made of payment to Patrick for his services in *AB*.

We still have the baptism scene in *AS* II to consider. Below is the passage describing the first meeting of Patrick with the *féinnidi* and the subsequent baptism:

> Tiaghoid isin doire iaromh 7 do choduilsead ann go trom tuirseach. Is í sin úair 7 aimsir do-rala Naomh Pádraicc cona chlēirchibh isin mbaile baoi a ffharradh Ros Coimhdhe tucc rí Laicchen dó, 7 tánccodar eidir laoch 7 chlēireach do chuartucchadh an doire sin. Níorbhó cian dóibh accā shiobhal cco ccualador ruchtadh 7 ro-shreanghal na bhfear mór. Samhalta re fúaim luinge ag saighidh saobh-chairrge, re gluasacht garbhghaoíthe 'gā trān-tuarccoin, adhaigh a n-adhaigh, ionbholccadh sróna Caoílte chuicce 7 úaidh.
>
> Teichid na clēirigh fō chēadōir go rāngadar Pādraig, 7 ro innseadar adhbhar a tteichidh dhó. Téid an Tāilgeann iar sin gusan ionadh a mbādor 7 coisreacthas íad immalle 'na ccodladh. Biodhgaid-siomh go borbneartmhar fō chēadóir. Ro labhuir an naomh-chléireach riú ann sin, 7 as eadh ro rāidh:
>
> 'A sheanōrcha úaisle,' ol sé, 'fāccbhaidh cumann 7 caradradh díabhuil 7 ticcidh a ccomhadhradh Dé uile-chumhachtaigh, an Mhic ro césadh dar bhur ccionn 7 d'fhuasccoil ō dhiabhal sibh, 7 an Spioraid Naoímh ō ffhúair sibh gach tiodhlacadh.'
>
> Tánoicc rath orra-somh ann sin ō Dhia, ionnus gur iarrsad ar Phadruic a mbaitseadh go lúath. Nírbhó hāilseadhach ro freaccradh an t-iarratas sin lais-[s]iomh, úair ro bhaitseas[t]air íad-somh go hathlomh ēsccaidh. Ro suidhigheadh puboill do Phádraig isin ionadh a ndeárna a mbaitseadh, 7 do bhāttor-somh ar aon maille ris innte, 7 é acc teaccoscc 7 acc trén-orducchadh creidimh 7 crābhaidh dhóiph. Agas do tóirneadh eacclas lais and 7 Ceall Úaisle a hainm.[50]

They came to the oakwood afterwards and they slept there heavily, tiredly. That was the time and age that St Patrick went with his clerics to the place that was near Ros Coimhdhe that the king of Leinster had given to him, and both warrior and cleric came to visit that oakwood. They had not walked far when they heard the groaning and great snoring of the big men. It was like the sound of a boat sailing whirlpools, like the movement of a

50 Ní Shéaghdha, *Agallamh*, ii, pp 41–2.

> fierce wind strongly battering it, face to face, the swelling of Caoilte's nose, [coming] towards him and [going] away from him.
>
> The clerics fled at once until they reached Patrick, and they told him the reason for their flight. The Adze-head went after that the place where they had been and he blessed them together in their sleep. They immediately leapt up sharply. The holy cleric spoke to them then, and this is what he said:
>
> 'Noble elders,' he said, 'leave the community and friendship of the devil and come into the company of the almighty God, his Son who was crucified on your behalf and released you from the devil, and the Holy Spirit from whom you got every gift.'
>
> Grace came upon them there from God, so that they asked Patrick to baptize them quickly. It was not negligently that that request was answered by him, for he baptized them quickly and eagerly. Patrick's pavilion was set up in that place where he performed the baptism, and they were together like that there, and he was teaching and firmly prescribing faith and piety to them. And a church was built by him there and Ceall Uaisle was its name.

We can see how this baptism scene from *AS* II mirrors almost exactly the corresponding passage in *AB*. Again, we have a double baptism described in one episode – there is the pseudo-baptism in which the *féinnidi* are blessed in their sleep and, immediately after, the baptism proper. The only noteworthy difference is that no mention is made of the names of the people who are being baptized in *AS* II, while Caílte, Finnchad and Crimthann are named in *AB*.

The depictions of the baptism scene in *AS* and in *AB*/*AS* II are interesting for a number of reasons. In spite of the discrepancies which we can discern between *AS* and *AB*/*AS* II on a micro-level, from a broader perspective it appears that none of the texts seems to have a theological interest in baptism, and there is no discussion or description of any technical aspects (although *AS*, of course, notes the need for water to perform the ritual). Is it the case that, in *AB*, the context of the baptism has fallen away and the meeting with Patrick has been left with no more meaning attached to it than any other episode in the narrative? That said, it is worth noting that, at the beginning of *AB*, after the first viewing of Patrick and his retinue, the *féinnidi* display quite negative feelings:

> 'Is iat sut,' *ar* Oisi*n*, 'na Tailgin*n* ro t*h*arngair*s*et *ar* ndraít*h*i 7 Fi*n*d dui*n*d. *Ocus* cid do d*h*enum fr*i*u?' 'Mu*n*a ma*r*bt*ar* iat, eireocha*i*t torai*n*d,' *ar* cach.[51]
>
> 'Those,' said Oisín, 'are the Adze-heads that Finn and our druids prophesied to us. And what shall we do to them?' 'If they are not killed, they will rise over us,' said the others.

51 Fo. 194ra40–2.

A wider point to bear in mind is that the baptism scene provides a rare instance of dialogue between the saint and a representative of the *fían*, and that representative is Caílte. The issue of a role-reversal between Caílte in *AS* and Oisín in *AB* has been raised previously. In the introduction to his partial edition, Hyde noted: 'bíonn Caoilte i n-áit Oisín agus Oisín i n-áit Chaoilte ar fud an leabhair'.[52] Along similar lines, Dooley and Roe observed: 'the principal characters [in *AB*] are Patrick and Oisín rather than the Patrick and Caílte of our text [i.e., *AS*]'.[53] Ó Muraíle had the following to say on the subject:

> Tá leide suimiúl ag Nessa Ní Shéaghdha i dtaobh an phointe seo: gur cheart dúinn ainm Oisín a chur in áit ainm Chaoilte san Agallamh Beag. Dá ndéanfaí sin, d'fhéadfaimis a áiteamh gurb atá againn cuntas ar imeachtaí Oisín le linn na dtréimhsí nach mbíonn tásc ná tuairisc air san Agallamh mór [i.e., *AS*]![54]

In fact, Ní Shéaghdha's comments reflect the situation more accurately than Ó Muraíle suggested:

> Féach gurbh é *Caoilte* a casadh ar Phádraig agus gurbh é *Oisín* a chuaidh i sídhaibh san *Agallaimh* mhóir. Ní cloistear trácht a thuille ar Oisín san '*Agallaimh Bhig*'; eachtraí Chaoilte a haithristear inte agus é ag iarraidh Pádraig do sheachaint, rud nár éirigh leis, mar tháinig Pádraig air agus é ina chodladh agus bhaist sé é … Cé go bhfuil an '*Agallamh Bheag*' ana ghairid ní fhágann san ná fuil sí go hiomlán – mar tá. Líonann sí easnamh san *Agallaimh* mhóir, mar ní hinnstear dúinn san *Agallaimh* sin cionnus a casadh Oisín (Caoilte san '*Agallaimh Bhig*') ar Phádraig, ná ní haithristear aon eachtraí ina thaobh ón uair a scar sé féin agus Caoilte le chéile i dtosach an sgéil.[55]

While Oisín is mentioned thirty-six times in *AB*, Caílte's name occurs on a staggering ninety-five occasions.[56] As we have seen in the summary above, Oisín does not feature greatly in *AB*, leaving the *fían* at the beginning of the tale and not returning to meet Caílte until the very end; it is Cailte who participates in the dialogue with Patrick (such as it exists in *AB*). This, of course, poses the question of whether it is justified to consider 'the line represented by the *Acallam Bec*' as being in the 'Patrician/Ossianic dialogue tradition'.[57]

52 '*An agallamh bheag*', 79. **53** *Tales of the elders*, p. xxxi. **54** '*Agallamh na seanórach*', p. 108. **55** *Agallamh*, i, p. xviii. **56** This is counting the occurrences of each name in the prose narrative as well as in the poetry of *AB*. Note that, on one occasion, in a poem, Oisín is referred to as 'mac Find' (fo. 200vb10). **57** Dooley, 'The date and purpose', 100.

Relationships between AB *and* AS/AS *II*

The evidence from the baptism scenes suggests close connections between *AB* and *AS* II. Ní Shéaghdha, in fact, proposed that *AS* II is made up of parts of *AS*, the whole of *AB*, and some additional poems and episodes.[58] She used *AB* to supply readings for her edition of *AS* II wherever the manuscript which formed the basis of her edition was deficient. The poetry can be used to illustrate further the links between *AB* and *AS* II. This is made clear in the table in the Appendix, which gives the first lines of the poems in the order in which they occur in *AB*, the number of stanzas in each version and the folio reference for the Book of Lismore. Also given are the corresponding first lines of the poems from *AS* II as they stand in Ní Shéaghdha's edition. As we can see, all poems of *AB* are represented in *AS* II until the latter breaks of unfinished at poem 13. The poems as they stand in *AB* and their counterparts in *AS* II generally correspond very closely. We may briefly note a couple of discrepancies in poem 9, 'In bhfuil uaib aderat frium', where the stanzas are arranged quite differently. If we take the order of stanzas in *AB* as a basis, in *AS* II stanzas 42–68 preceed stanzas 19–41, while the final seven stanzas correspond in both texts. Naturally, the question arises whether there are any correspondences between the poems of *AB* and *AS* also to be observed. There seem to be only two instances. In *AS*, we find a poem with the first line 'Cuillenn bá hadhba fhiadaig'[59] (cf. poem 1 in the Appendix), but similarities do not extent further than the first line. Similarly, the first two lines of the poem 'Baili na ríg, Ros Temhrach' in *AS* correspond to the first two lines of poem 13 in *AB*, but again this is the only overlap and the poem in *AS* is much shorter, having only three stanzas where *AB* has thirty-six.[60]

In conclusion, *AB* is a tale of considerable interest which is yet to receive the attention it deserves. This study has sought to provide an introduction to the narrative of *AB* and to contextualize the tale with regard to *AS* and *AS* II. As has been shown, *AB* is most closely related to *AS* II. I would suggest that, besides the obvious need for an up-to-date edition and translation of *AB*, a collation of the text with both *AS* and *AS* II is very much a desideratum and should form the starting-point for future study.[61]

58 Ní Shéaghdha says of the author of *AS* II: 'Is é dhein sé ná furmhór *Agallmha* moiré na sean-aimsire, agus an *Agallamh Bheag* go léir, do chuir le chéile, roinnt ana-bheag dánta agus sgéalta do chur leó, agus an chaint agus an stíl do chur beagáinín i n-oireamhaint do lucht a aimsire féin': *Agallamh*, i, p. xxxi. **59** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 5870–84. **60** Ibid., ll. 1475–80.

61 I am greatly indebted to Dr Simon Innes and to the editors for their useful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

Appendix: the poetry of AB

In the cases of the poems marked *, some stanzas in Ní Shéaghdha's edition are drawn from *AB*.

	First line (***AB*** / *AS* II)	Location (***AB*** / *AS* II)	No. of stanzas
1.	**'Cuilleand ba hadhbha fhiadha'**	**194rb31–va17**	**15**
	'Cuilleann ba hadhbha d'fhiadhaibh'	i, pp 5–8	14
2.	**'Esteachtt becon, biom nar dtost'**	**194vb13–195ra2**	**17**
	'Éistidh beaccan, biom ar ttost'	ii, pp 3–6	17*
3.	**'Ar mallacht ar mhnai Irgail'**	**195va27–38**	**5**
	'Mallacht úainn for mnaoi Iorghail'	ii, pp 14–15	5
4.	**'Dámh trir thancatar ille'**	**195vb33–196ra32**	**22**
	'Dámh trír tanccador a-le'	ii, pp 21–7	36
5.	**'Fulachtt na Morrighna anall'**	**196rb24–39**	**8**
	'Fulachtt na Mor-righna anall'	ii, pp 29–31	8*
6.	**'Deichen do-rin Bir Deichin'**	**196vb33–197ra18**	**16**
	'Dechean do-gniomh Bior nDeichin'	ii, pp 35–8	16
7.	**'Deisid Breasal for in maigh'**	**197ra35–7**	**1**
	'Deisidh Beárna for an moigh'	ii, p. 39	1
8.	**'A Fhiacra, indis do chach'**	**197ra20–1**	**1**
	'A Fhionnchaidh, innis do chách'	ii, p. 42	1
9.	**'In bhfuil uaib aderat frium'**	**197va11–198rb31**	**76**
	'An bhfuil neach uaibh abradh riom'	ii, pp 44–57	77
10.	**'Ac so in fert a ngenir Find'**	**198rb36–va13**	**10**
	'Acc so an feart i ngeanoir Fionn'	ii, pp 57–9	9
11.	**'Cuncha [sic], cnoc os cind Life'**	**199ra20–vb20**	**64**
	'Cnuca, chnoc os linn Life'	iii, pp 169–80	61
12.	**'Ingnadh in fhis tarfas dam'**	**199vb26–200ra19**	**17**
	'Iongnadh fís tádhbhas damh'	iii, pp 180–3	19
13.	**'Baile na righ Ros Temhrach'**	**200ra30–va17**	**36**
	'Baile na riogh Ros Teamhrach'	iii, pp 187–90	17*
14.	**'Ni maith aniu mhirlabra'**	**200va29–vb24**	**17**
	n/a	n/a	n/a

The transmission and text of *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*: a re-appraisal

Caoimhín Breatnach

The tale *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* is found in forty-one manuscripts. The earliest copy was written in 1651 and the remainder range in date from 1718 to 1850.[1] The extant manuscript sources indicate that the narrative has undergone several important modifications in the course of its transmission. Identifying such modifications is a relatively easy task; analyzing the significance of the different modifications and, in particular, assessing which of the extant versions is closest to an earlier, non-extant narrative are much more difficult challenges. One manuscript source, namely, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 L 27 (556), written in 1737–8, is substantially different from the others in that it contains a considerably expanded version of the narrative. The version in this manuscript is very similar to the edition published by Standish Hayes O'Grady,[2] but the manuscript actually used by O'Grady is, unfortunately, no longer extant.[3] The text edited by Nessa Ní Shéaghdha is the shorter version. This edition is based, for the most part, on the earliest extant witness, namely, RIA MS 24 P 9 (739), written in 1651 by Dáibhídh Ó Duibhgeannáin. Ní Shéaghdha based her edition on MS 24 P 9 not only because this is the oldest extant manuscript, but also because it was written by a descendant of the senior branch of the Ó Duibhgeannáin family, one of the most renowned learned families in Ireland. She also quotes Paul Walsh's description of Dáibhídh Ó Duibhgeannáin as 'one of the best transcribers of his age'.[4] It should be borne in mind, however, that irrespective of any great merits on his part, a scribe is naturally bound by the nature of the material he is transcribing and by the circumstances and conditions under which he has to make his transcriptions. In the particular case of Ó Duibhgeannáin, as will be seen below, Walsh's description of him as 'one of the best transcribers of his age' may have to be revised to a certain extent. More importantly, in what follows, I will examine the question of whether the version of the *Tóruigheacht* contained in MS 24 P 9 is, in all instances, likely to be more faithful than the longer version to an earlier text. This examination will include also evidence from three other narratives which immediately follow the *Tóruigheacht* in MS 24 P 9.

1 N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967), pp xiv–xv. **2** *Toruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghrainne* (1857). **3** Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, p. xv, n. 1. **4** Ibid., p. xiv.

Narrative discrepancies in the shorter version

Examination of the shorter version of the *Tóruigheacht*, particularly the version in MS 24 P 9, suggests that there are a number of narrative discrepancies to be found in it. One instance is the ending of the narrative. In the version in MS 24 P 9, Gráinne summons her children and urges them to seek vengeance for the death of their father. Somewhat abruptly, the text ends at this point.[5] It would seem to be the case, therefore, that the ending of an earlier version has been omitted in Ó Duibhgeannáin's version. I will return to this matter below. Apparent narrative discrepancies are to be found elsewhere in Ó Duibhgeannáin's version and it is noteworthy that these discrepancies are resolved in the longer version.

We may begin with a short item of text. In one section of the tale, Diarmaid relates how a warrior named Conán killed a worm which had a hundred heads. In the shorter version, the means by which he did so is described as follows:

> Agus arna faicsin sin do Chonán ro chuir méar a suaithneamh síoda an Gha Dheirg 7 tug rogha n-áthusach n-urchair dhi … 7 ro mharbh d'áthus an urchair sin hí.[6]
>
> And when Conán saw it (i.e. the worm) he put his finger into the silken loop of the Ga Dearg and he aimed a most successful cast at it … and he killed it with the success of that cast.[7]

The narrative discrepancy here is that the Ga Dearg was a spear belonging to Diarmaid and yet nowhere in the shorter version is there mention of his giving the spear to Conán. As indicated in Ní Shéaghdha's variant readings, this is not the case in the longer version in MS 23 L 27 which adds the text marked in italics in the following:

> Agus arna faicsin sin do Chonán ro chuir méar a suaithneamh síoda an Gha Dheirg '*7 is mise féin*,' *ar Diarmaid, 'tuc iasacht an ghath dó <mar> ghlacas conailbhe 7 bádha ris óir do bhí fios agam nach raibh a marbhadh san ccruinne muna marbhadh an Gath Dearg í.*'[8]
>
> And when Conán saw it (i.e. the worm) he put his finger into the silken loop of the Ga Dearg '*and it is I myself*,' *said Diarmaid*, '*who lent him the spear, for I conceived an attachment and affection for him because I knew that nothing in the world could kill it if the Ga Dearg could not kill it*.'[9]

A narrative discrepancy in this section of the text in MS 24 P 9 is also reflected in the fact that for *an Gha Dheirg* in this manuscript, all four of the other man-

5 For a discussion of the different endings to the *Tóruigheacht* see ibid., pp xvii–xviii. **6** Ibid., p. 64, ll. 1104–7. **7** Ibid., p. 65. **8** Ibid., pp 64, ll. 1104–5, and 114. **9** Ibid., p. 65 (text in italics my translation; cf. O'Grady, *Toruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghrainne*, pp 132–3).

uscripts used by Ní Shéaghdha for variant readings read *a shleighe* ('of his spear').[10]

Another apparent discrepancy in the earliest manuscript witness to the *Tóruigheacht* is found in that section of the narrative which immediately follows the death of Diarmaid. Fionn has the power to heal Diarmaid's wounds by giving him a drink of water from the palms of his hands. He deliberately delays in bringing the water to Diarmaid, however, and by the time he eventually does so, it is too late. Osgar is unhappy with Fionn's delaying tactics and warns him twice that he will have to account to him if he does not give the water to Diarmaid. In the light of this, one would naturally expect some response from Osgar to Fionn after Diarmaid's death. As we can see from the following, however, there is no mention of any response in the version in MS 24 P 9:

> Adubhairt Fionn: 'Fágbhum an tulach so,' ar sé, 'ar eagla go mbéaradh Aonghus an Bhrogha 7 Tuatha Dé Danann oruinn ann 7 gion go ffuil cuid do mharbhadh Diarmada uí Dhuibhne aguinn ní móide go ngébhdís sgéala uainn.'[11]
>
> Fionn said: 'Let us leave this mound,' said he, 'for fear that Aonghus of the Brugh and the Tuatha Dé Danann would come upon us there and although we have had no part in the death of Diarmaid ó Duibhne, it is not likely that they would accept our pleadings.'[12]

In the longer version, we find the expected reaction from Osgar (the text additional to that of MS 24 P 9 is in italics and is taken from MS 23 L 27):

> *7 budh tuirseach dobrónach dá éis sin iad 7 d'fhéach Osgar go fiochmhar feargach ar Fhionn 7 is seadh ro rádh gomo mhó an sgéal Diarmaid do bheith marbh ná eision 7 gur chailiodar Fianaibh Éirionn a ccuinghidh catha dá thoisg. Is annsin* adubhairt Fionn: 'Fágbhum an tulach so,' ar sé, 'ar eagla go mbéaradh Aonghus an Bhrogha 7 Tuatha Dé Danann oruinn ann 7 gion go ffuil cuid do mharbhadh Diarmada uí Dhuibhne againn ní móide go ngébhdís sgéal uainn.' '*Is briathar dhamhsi*,' *ar Osgar*, '*dá bhfeasainn-si gurb le haighidh Diarmada do-rinnis-si seilg muice Binne Golban nach diongthá í go bráth*.'
>
> *and they were sad and mournful after that and Osgar looked fiercely and angrily at Fionn and what he said was that it was a greater matter that Diarmaid was dead rather than him and that the Fiana of Ireland had lost their prop of battle on account of him. Then* Fionn said: 'Let us leave this mound,' said he, 'for fear that Aonghus of the Brugh and the Tuatha Dé Danann would come upon us there and although we have had no part in the death of Diarmaid

10 Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, p. 114. **11** Ibid., p. 118. **12** Unless otherwise stated translations here and below are my own.

> ó Duibhne, it is not likely that they would accept an excuse from us.' '*I vow*,' *said Osgar*, '*that if I had known that it was against Diarmaid that you engaged in the hunting of the pig of Ben Bulben, you would never have done it*.'

Ní Shéaghdha was also clearly of the opinion that the text of MS 24 P 9 presents a difficulty at this point in the narrative because her edited text is based here on Dublin, Trinity College, MS H.3.23 (1344), RIA MS 23 L 39 (114) and RIA MS 23 O 17 (62), written in 1718, *c.* 1775 and 1731 respectively. This version reads as follows:

> Agus d'éirigh Osgar do bhorb-thulcha troim-fheirge iona sheasamh 7 do bhreathnaigh a cheann do bhuain d'Fhionn ar an láthair sin go ndubhairt Oisín: 'A mhic,' ar sé, 'as fíor gur thuill sé sin uait-si 7 ó Fhiannaibh Éirionn go hiomlán tré gan Diarmaid d'fhóirighthin, 7 ná déin-si an dá léan a n-aon-ló dhúinn, 7 fágbham an tulach so annois ar eagla go ttiocfadh Aonghus chuguinn 7 nách creidfeadh uainn nách sinn féin tug bás do Dhiarmaid gion gur chionntach Fionn rena bhás.'[13]
>
> And Osgar rose up in a fierce attack of great anger and was about to cut his head off Fionn on that spot but that Oisín said: 'Son,' said he, 'it is true that he has deserved that of you and of all the Fiana of Ireland through not helping Diarmaid, but do not cause the two sorrows in one day for us, and let us leave this mound now for fear that Aonghus might come to us and that he would not believe from us that it was not we who brought death to Diarmaid although Fionn is guilty of his death.'[14]

It is possible that either the text of MS 23 L 27 or that of the other three later manuscripts is closer to an earlier *Tóruigheacht* than that of MS 24 P 9. Another possibility is that the additional material in both cases reflects later attempts to resolve a discrepancy at this point in the narrative. Whatever about the plausibility of either of these explanations, there seems to be a case for arguing that the text in MS 24 P 9 has been abridged at this point.

A further apparent narrative discrepancy is found in that section of the tale in which Fionn explains to Diarmaid why it was one of his taboos to hunt swine. In the course of this explanation, Fionn recalls how Diarmaid's father, Donn, describes the manner in which Diarmaid was born and how Aonghus an Bhrogha took Diarmaid to foster and rear after his birth. Donn also states that a son was born to a servant at the same time. Fionn then relates that he and Donn went to the house of Aonghus one night and that Donn became very envious because the son of the servant was held in equal affection to Diarmaid:

13 Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, pp 94–6, ll. 1675–84. **14** Ibid., pp 95–7.

> 'Dá madh cumhain leat-[s]a,' ar Donn ó Donnchadha, 'an uair do bhádhus-[s]a ar foghail 7 ar forfhógra uait féin 7 ón fFéin 7 tarla Crochnad inghean Churraigh Lifthe torrach uaim, 7 ruc mac dhamh, 7 do ghlac Aonghus an Bhrogha an mac sin dá altrom 7 dá oileamhuin. Agus rucadh mac eile do Roc mac Diochmhairc isin aimsir sin, 7 do iarr sé orm-sa an mac sin do ghlacadh dá altrom 7 dá oileamhain, 7 adubhart-sa nachar chubhaidh rium mac an mhodhadh do ghlacadh. Agus atá mo mhac féin ag Aonghus 7 ní fhaca re bliadhuin é, 7 do-ghébhum ar aon aoidheacht na hoidhche anocht ann.'
>
> 'Do ghluaiseas féin,' ar Fionn, '7 Donn go teach Aonghusa an Bhrogha an oidhche sin, 7 bhádhuis-[s]i, a Dhiarmaid uí Dhuibhne, astigh an oidhche sin. Agus do uhí cion mór ag Aonghus ort, 7 níor mhó sin ná in cion do uhí ag muintir Aonghusa ar mac an reachtaire, 7 do bhí formad mór ar th'atha[i]r-si.'[15]
>
> 'If you remember,' said Donn ó Donnchadha, 'when I was outlawed and banished from you and from the Fiana that Crochnad, daughter of Currach Life became pregnant by me and bore me a son, and Aonghus of the Brugh took that son to foster and to rear him. And another son was born to Roc son of Diochmharc at that time and he asked me to take that son to foster and to rear him, and I said that it was not fitting for me to take the servant's son. And Aonghus has my own son and I have not seen him for a year, and we shall both get hospitality for this night there.'
>
> 'I myself and Donn,' said Fionn, 'went to the house of Aonghus of the Brugh that night and you, Diarmaid ó Duibhne, were in that night. And Aonghus had a great affection for you, and that [affection] was not greater than the affection which the people of Aonghus had for the son of the steward, and your father was very envious.'[16]

The text here lacks continuity. After Donn refuses to foster him, there is no explanation of what happened to the servant's son. Furthermore, when Donn and Fionn visit Aonghus' house a year later, we find that the servant's son is held in great affection there, but it is not explained to the reader even why he should be in Aonghus' house at this time. This discrepancy is resolved in the longer version. Instead of 'agus rucadh mac eile do Roc mac Diochmhairc' ('and another son was born to Roc son of Diochmharc'), the longer version reads 'et do ruc Crochnidh mac oile iona dhiaidh sin do Reóch mac Díochadh'[17] ('and Crochnidh bore another son afterwards to Reóch son of Díochadh'). At the point at which there seems to be a lack of continuity in the shorter version, that is, after 'adubhart-sa nachar chubhaidh rium mac an mhodhadh do ghlacadh' ('I said that it was not fitting for me to take the servant's son'), the longer version adds the following passage:

15 Ibid., p. 84, ll. 1465–80. **16** Ibid., p. 85. **17** Ibid., p. 116.

> D'[i]ar sé orm impidhe do chuir ar Aonghus an Bhrogha an mac sin do ghlacadh 7 go ttiobhrach sé proinn naonmhair gacha nóna dham ag teach Aonghus[a] 7 do chuirius <impidhe> ar Aonghus an mac sin do ghlacadh ar daltachas 7 do ghlac Aonghus a mhac 7 ní bhfuil tráth ó shoin a leith nach cuireadh proinn naonmhair go teach Aonghus[a] fám chomhair.[18]
>
> He asked me to entreat Aonghus of the Brugh to take that son and that he would give me refection for nine people every evening at Aonghus' house and I entreated Aonghus to take that son in fosterage and Aonghus took his son and there has not been a time since then in which refection for nine people has not been sent to Aonghus' house for me.

Later on in this section, we find another significant variant reading in the longer version. For '7 níor mhó sin ná in cion do uhí ag muintir Aonghusa ar mac an reachtaire' ('and that [affection] was not greater than the affection which the people of Aonghus had for the son of the steward'), MS 23 L 27 reads 'ro bhí mac an rachtair a ccomhluadar leatsi an oidhche sin 7 do bhí cion mór ag Aonghus 7 a mhuinntir air'[19] ('and the son of the steward was in your company that night and Aonghus and his people had great affection for him'). In the longer version of this section, therefore, there is no lack of continuity as found in the shorter version. As is the case with the section of the *Tóruigheacht* immediately following Diarmaid's death, discussed above, we cannot be certain if the longer version is closer to an earlier narrative than the shorter version or if it represents a later attempt to resolve a narrative discrepancy in the shorter version. The possibility is raised again, however, that the shorter version is an abridged version of an earlier narrative.

We may now examine another section of the *Tóruigheacht* in which Diarmaid encounters foreign warriors whose leaders have been asked by Fionn to come to Ireland in pursuit of Diarmaid. This episode takes up 220 lines of Ní Shéaghdha's edition.[20] In this section of text, Diarmaid sees a fleet of ships coming towards land when he is on the summit of a mound. After they have landed, Diarmaid encounters three warrior-leaders who say word was sent to them by Fionn to seek Diarmaid. Their names are Dubhchosach, Fannchosach and Trénchosach.[21] Diarmaid does not reveal his identity to the foreign warriors and succeeds in killing many of them by getting them to attempt to perform various difficult feats over a period of three days. The foreigners eventually find out that it was Diarmaid whom they had encountered on each of the three days and go in pursuit of him and Gráinne. Diarmaid then kills the three leaders of the pursuing party and, when the rest of the followers see that their leaders have fallen, they take flight and are all killed. The first of the leaders of the pursuing party is called 'macaomh na beirte uaine'[22] ('the youth of the green garb'). The second and third leaders

18 Ibid. **19** Ibid. **20** Ibid., pp 32–44, ll. 543–762. **21** Ibid., p. 34, l. 567. **22** Ibid., p. 44,

are not named. The leaders of the pursuing party are clearly not the three warrior-leaders, namely, Dubhchosach, Fannchosach and Trénchosach, whom Diarmaid encounters at the beginning of the episode. It is striking that none of these three warrior-leaders is mentioned again in the course of the entire episode.

This section of the narrative is much more detailed in the longer version and much of the additional material is concerned with Diarmaid's encounter with the three leaders of the foreign warriors. Before the final encounter with the foreigners, there is a detailed account of the manner in which Diarmaid engaged in combat with Dubhchosach, Fannchosach and Trénchosach and of how he left them bound together, knowing that Fionn would eventually come upon them and that this would be a cause of grievance to him. The three warrior leaders then die of the hard bonds that were on them.[23] The question, therefore, that arises is whether the additional material relating to Dubhchosach, Fannchosach and Trénchosach in the longer version is a later addition or whether this additional material, or at least some part of it, was in an earlier version of the text.

There are several possible explanations for the differences between the version of the *Tóruigheacht* in MS 24 P 9 and other versions, in particular the longer version contained in MS 23 L 27. One possible explanation is, of course, that the longer version represents a later, substantially expanded version. It has been seen, however, that some of the additional material in this version resolves apparent narrative discrepancies in the shorter version, most notably in the earliest extant witness. It could be the case, therefore, that at least some of the additional material in the longer version reflects an earlier non-extant version of the *Tóruigheacht*. Even if it were the case that some of the additional material in the longer version represents a later attempt to resolve narrative discrepancies in the shorter version, this would still leave us with the possibility that the shorter version represents an abridged version of an earlier *Tóruigheacht*. It is impossible to be certain on this point as the shorter version is the earliest extant one. It may be helpful, therefore, to examine other texts contained in MS 24 P 9.

Abridgement of other narratives in RIA MS 24 P 9

The four texts at the beginning of MS 24 P 9 are given the headings below in the Royal Irish Academy *Catalogue*:[24]

1. P. 1. [Tóruigheacht Diarmuda agus Ghráinne].
2. P. 41*m*. Tromdháimh Ghuaire.
3. P. 65. Cath Muighe Tuireadh.

l. 752. **23** Cf. ibid., pp 111–12; O'Grady, *Toruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghrainne*, pp 90–106. **24** T.F. O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, 28 fasc. (1926–70), xviii, pp 2241–2.

4. P. 98. Religious tract telling how the saints of Ireland prayed for a purging plague and how Patrick opposed them.

A noteworthy feature of the three texts following the *Tóruigheacht* is that all three, in one way or another, are shorter forms of earlier versions of these narratives. In the case of the second text above, namely, *Tromdháimh Ghuaire*,[25] there are several instances of omission and abridgement of text as found in an earlier version. One instance of abridgement occurs in that section of the text in which the poet, Seanchán, accuses a servant woman of eating food intended for him. The woman says it is not she who ate the food but mice. Seanchán first satirizes the mice and then satirizes cats for not curbing the mice. A section which occupies sixty lines of the edited text includes the servant woman's denial and two satires, one on the mice and one on the leader of the cats.[26] The corresponding text in MS 24 P 9 is a much-abridged version in which the two satires are omitted. It begins with the servant woman saying it was not she who ate the food but the mice:

> 'Ní mé,' ar sí, 'acht na lochaidh a-dúaidh é.' 'Más íad,' ar sé, 'aorfad-sa íad 7 ní híad is cóir d'áoradh acht a ttigerna .i. na cait' 7 do ghabh dá n-aoradh 7 tainic menma na n-áor sin do chenn na ccat .i. Iorusán mac Árusáin 7 é a n-úaimh chnuic don táoibh soir do Chlúain Meic Nóis 7 do ghabh ag áoradh an chait go diocra.[27]
>
> 'It is not I,' said she, 'but it is the mice who ate it.' 'If it is they,' said he, 'I will satirize them and it is not they who should be satirized but their lord, i.e., the cats,' and he set about satirizing them and the spirit of those satires reached the leader of the cats, i.e., Iorusán son of Árasán who was in a cave of a hill on the eastern side of Clonmacnoise and he set about satirizing the cat fervently.

The text in MS 24 P 9 would seem to reflect a conscious decision to summarize an earlier longer version of this section of the narrative.

In the case of two poems omitted in the version of *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* in MS 24 P 9, there is a scribal explanation for the omission. The first of these two poems was composed by Dallán on the king of Airghialla's shield and the first line as found in the earlier version is 'A Aed suidhcern seig'.[28] The poem is immediately preceded by Dallán stating 'et doronus-sa duan eli molta don sciath'[29] ('and I have composed another praise-poem for the shield'). The corresponding text in MS 24 P 9 is '7 do-rinne dúan eile don sgéith cédna 7 ni mur mhaith uirre nachar sgriobadh annso hí'[30] ('and he composed another poem for

25 M. Joynt (ed.), *Tromdámh Guaire* (1931). **26** Ibid., pp 22–4, ll. 693–752. **27** RIA MS 24 P 9, p. 56. **28** Joynt, *Tromdámh Guaire*, p. 4, ll. 88–103. **29** Ibid., p. 3, l. 87. **30** MS 24 P 9, p. 44.

the same shield and it is not out of regard for it that it was not written here'). Here, we are explicitly told that, for reasons of personal taste, a poem from the scribe's exemplar has been omitted by Dáibhídh Ó Duibhgeannáin.

The second poem omitted in MS 24 P 9 is that beginning 'A Chonnra Chaeich'.[31] The poem is immediately preceded by the following item of text:

> Do fiarfaig ri Laigen in raibhi dan molta acu dho. 'Ata imorro,' ar in lobur, '7 is misi is recaire dho;' 7 ro gab in lobur in duan.[32]
>
> The king of Leinster asked had they a praise-poem for him. 'There is indeed,' said the leper, 'and I am the reciter for it' and the leper recited the poem.

In MS 24 P 9 the corresponding section of prose reads as follows:

> Do fhíafraigh an rí an raibhe dán aca dhó. Adubhairt an clamh go raibhe 7 gurbh é féin budh racaire dhó 7 ro ghabh é 7 ro fhágbhus amuigh é ara olcus.[33]
>
> The king asked had they a poem for him. The leper said they had and that he himself would be the reciter for it and he recited it and I have omitted it because of its badness.

Here again, the scribe of the later version states that he was responsible for the omission of this particular section of text. Whether Ó Duibhgeannáin was also responsible for other abridgements in his version of *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* is not certain. Evidence indicating that incomplete versions of this and other texts cited above were in Ó Duibhgeannáin's exemplar will be discussed below.

We may now look at the third text cited in the list above, namely, *Cath Muighe Tuireadh*. This is the early modern version of the tale as edited by Brian Ó Cuív.[34] This version omits that part of the tale leading up to the actual battle and covers approximately the same ground as the second half of the earlier version of the tale.[35] It seems clear from the opening sentence of the tale that earlier narrative has been omitted in this version as it begins *in medias res*:

> Iar ccinneadh et iar ccomhaontughadh comhairle d'fhine Fomhra, 7 iar n-ordughadh ionaidh 7 aimsire do chur an chatha chum a ttangadar in turas sin.[36]
>
> After the Fomorian race had decided and agreed counsel and after arranging a place and time to fight the battle for which they had come on that expedition.

31 Joynt, *Tromdámh Guaire*, p. 36, ll. 1157–65. **32** Ibid., pp 35–6, ll. 1153–6. **33** MS 24 P 9, p. 62. **34** *Cath Muighe Tuireadh* (1945). **35** E.A. Gray (ed. and trans.), *Cath Maige Tuired* (1982). **36** Ó Cuív, *Cath Muighe Tuireadh*, p. 21.

The text here begins at the point corresponding to §96 in the edited, earlier version.[37] The beginning of the tale, as we have it here, is not set in any context and the phrase 'chum a ttangadar in turus sin' ('for which they had come on that expedition') is presumably a reference to a previous section of narrative.

The fourth text in the list cited above is described as a religious tract telling how the saints of Ireland prayed for a purging plague and how Patrick opposed them. This text is, in fact, a version of the 'Second vision of Adamnán', edited by Whitley Stokes from the *Leabhar Breac* (RIA MS 23 P 16 (1230)).[38] The version in MS 24 P 9 has no heading. Furthermore, unlike his practice elsewhere in the manuscript, Ó Duibhgeannáin does not write any of the opening line in large letters. This ties in with the fact that the opening section of the narrative as found in the earlier *Leabhar Breac* (where it is written in Latin)[39] is omitted here. The version in MS 24 P 9 differs from the earlier version in several other respects, most notably in that it is much shorter. Some of the passages as found in the earlier version are omitted while others are greatly abridged. Notable examples of abridgement occur in those sections beginning with the words 'is tria aíne' ('it is through fasting'). The final sixteen sections (§§33–48) of the text, as edited by Stokes, begin with these words.[40] Of these, §§36, 39 and 46 are omitted in MS 24 P 9 and §§33–5, 37, 40–4 and 47 are abridged. In the case of §§37 and 42, for example, only the opening words of the relevant sections of the earlier version are found in MS 24 P 9. The text of §37 in the earlier version is as follows:

> Is tria áine 7 ernaigthi tra romemaid in cath ré Moysi for tuathu Amaléch, uair intan conócbad Moysi a lámu hi crosfigill fri Dia nomuided forsna genntib. Intan immurro noléced sís la thoeb no mhuided fora muinntir fesin. Conid desin dobertha ailge arda foa doitib, co ru scaich slaide na ngénnti. Ocus rosoud in grian on trath co araile tria ernaigthi a oenur.[41]

> It is through fasting and prayer, too, that Moses routed the tribes of Amalek. For whenever Moses would hold up his hands to God in cross-vigil the heathen were defeated. When, however, he would let them down by his side his own people were discomfited. Wherefore high stones were put under his arms until the slaughter of the heathen had ended. And the sun was turned from one hour to another through the prayer of Moses alone.[42]

The corresponding text in MS 24 P 9 is as follows:

37 Ibid., p. 58; cf. Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 50. **38** 'Adamnan's second vision', *Revue celtique*, 12 (1891), 420–43. **39** Ibid., §§1 and 2. **40** Ibid., pp 432–8; §§34–48 begin with 'is tria aíne 7 ernaigthi' ('it is through fasting and prayer'). **41** Ibid., p. 434. **42** Ibid., p. 435.

> Is tria aoíni do bhris Maoísi cath mór for Aimaileach.[43]
>
> It is through fasting that Moses routed Amalek.

The text of §42 in the earlier version is as follows:

> Is tria áine 7 ernaigthi, tra, rosoerad Daníel fáith do chuithe na leoman. Conid e praind doratad co Daníel on Choimdid iarsan áine dos-gní .i. araile fáith oca raba methel oc beín phupu na finemnu, 7 Bácúcc a ainmm in *fh*átha sin, conlu[i]d in fáid la biad dia methil, conus-tanic aingel ina agaid, 7 tuarcaib lais in fáith cusin mbiad 7 oen *fh*oiltne dia *fh*olt-sum il-láim in aingil co dú a mbúi Daníel isin cuthi leoman, curas-caithset hi n-oentaid .i. Daníel 7 na leomain.[44]
>
> It is through fasting and prayer, moreover, that the prophet Daniel was saved from the pit of the lions; and this is the meal that was sent by the Lord to Daniel after the fast he performed, to wit, (there was) a certain prophet who had a crew plucking the bunches of the vineyard, and Bácúcc was the name of that prophet, and the prophet went with food to his crew, and an angel met him, and lifted up the prophet with the food, one of the hairs of his head being in the angel's hand, (and carried him) to the place where Daniel was, in the lions' pit, so that they, even Daniel and the lions, consumed the food in unity.[45]

The corresponding text in MS 24 P 9 is:

> Is tria aoíni ro saoradh Daniel faid a cuiche an leomain.[46]
>
> It is through fasting that the prophet Daniel was saved from the pit of the lion.

Another noteworthy feature of two of the texts in MS 24 P 9 discussed above, namely, *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* and the 'Second vision of Adomnán', pertains to the ending of these narratives. *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* breaks off incomplete at a point corresponding to l. 1255 of Joynt's edition, and there are a further sixty lines of text in the latter version.[47] Ó Duibhgeannáin left the bottom of p. 63 and all of p. 64 blank. This would seem to indicate that *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* was incomplete in his exemplar and that he left space in his manuscript with the expectation of completing the text from another source. The final section of the 'Second vision of Adamnán' in MS 24 P 9 differs substantially from the corresponding final section (§48) in the earlier (*Leabhar Breac*) version. It

43 RIA MS 24 P 9, p. 103. **44** Stokes, 'Adamnan's second vision', pp 434–6. **45** Ibid., pp 435–7. **46** RIA MS 24 P 9, p. 103. **47** Joynt, *Tromdámh Guaire*, pp 39–40.

ends on p. 104, and Ó Duibhgeannáin left a blank space of almost half a page which suggests that this text too was incomplete in his exemplar. It has been mentioned above that the ending of the *Tóruigheacht*, as found in MS 24 P 9, is somewhat unsatisfactory. There is no blank space at the end of this text which is followed on p. 41 by *Tromdháimh Ghuaire*. There is, however, no *finis* at the end of the *Tóruigheacht*. We may compare here *Cath Muighe Tuireadh*, the ending of which (on p. 97 of the manuscript) is followed by a space of approximately two lines and then by the words 'Conadh é Cath Muighe Tuireadh go nuige sin. FINIS'.

Conclusion

It has been seen above that there would seem to be some narrative discrepancies in the shorter version of *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* as found in the earliest extant manuscript witness. It has been suggested that these discrepancies may have come about as a result of abridgement in the course of the narrative's transmission. It has also been seen that the three texts immediately following the *Tóruigheacht* in MS 24 P 9 are abridged versions of those narratives as found in earlier sources. In the case of *Tromdháimh Ghuaire*, we have evidence which indicates that the scribe of MS 24 P 9, Dáibhídh Ó Duibhgeannáin, was responsible for the omission of two poems. We have no explanation for the omission of other material. Incomplete text and blank spaces left at the end of both *Tromdháimh Ghuaire* and the 'Second vision of Adamnán' suggest that these texts were incomplete in Ó Duibhgeannáin's exemplar.

Unlike the three narratives following it in MS 24 P 9, the *Tóruigheacht* cannot be compared with an earlier extant version. A longer version, however, is found in a later manuscript witness. We cannot be certain, therefore, which of these versions most faithfully represents an earlier version. It has been seen above that some of the additional material in the longer version resolves apparent narrative discrepancies in the shorter version, most notably that in MS 24 P 9. It has also been seen that, even if we allow for the possibility that this material was not part of the earlier version, it may still indicate that narrative abridgement occurred in the version found in MS 24 P 9.

If the transmission of the *Tóruigheacht* is taken in isolation, one might naturally assume that the shorter version in MS 24 P 9 is closer to an earlier version as this copy predates the earliest extant copy of the longer version by over eighty years and was also written by a renowned scribe of the seventeenth century. As noted above, however, other matters must be taken into consideration in assessing the value of manuscript witnesses, even when such manuscripts were written by reputable scribes. Taking all the evidence into consideration, it is possible that that the earliest extant copy of the *Tóruigheacht* is an abridged version of an earlier narrative.

Fiannaigheacht, family, faith and fatherland

Ruairí Ó hUiginn

Ranging from our earliest written sources down to oral recitation of relatively recent times, *fiannaigheacht* literature has spanned most of the Gaelic literary tradition, as indeed it has the Gaelic world. A small but significant testimony to the cultural centrality of this branch of tradition in later times is the fact that the Modern-Irish term *fiannaíocht* may be used with reference not only to the literature of this cycle but also to romantic storytelling in general.[1]

Despite its prominence, the development of this tradition is not always easy to follow. This is particularly true of its earliest stages. The relative paucity of *fiannaigheacht* material in sources dating from pre-Norman times is striking,[2] especially given the supposedly divine origin and associations of Fionn – in contradistinction to Lugh, for example, also a divine personage but one for whom we have a significant body of material. Various attempts have been made to explain the poor attestation of *fiannaigheacht* in early sources. Eoin Mac Neill suggested that these tales originally were associated with certain politically impotent subject peoples, only later being adopted by the dominant sections of the population.[3] In Gerard Murphy's more socially conditioned view, *fiannaigheacht* was, in its earliest as in its latest phrases, primarily the preserve of the lower classes, again only later being accepted by the aristocracy.[4] More recently, Kim McCone proposed that the poor attestation of material associated with Fionn in these early sources may be due to intentional avoidance on the part of clerical writers through whom our early literature was mediated.[5]

Examination of such early fragments as have been transmitted to us appears to show a tradition in evolution. On the basis of genealogical and historical evidence, Mac Neill held that the cycle had a midland origin, centred on a vassal people known as the Uí Tharsaig.[6] T.F. O'Rahilly, however, pointed out that there is a basis for assuming not only a midland Fionn, but also what he terms 'a Laginian Finn and a Finn associated with the Érainn of Munster', these terms being applied to what he saw as various ethnic groups in Ireland.[7] Of course,

1 See N. Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (1977), s.v. **2** A survey of this early material can be found in K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Fianaigeacht* (1910), and in E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp lv–lxi. **3** *Duanaire Finn*, i, pp xxxi–xliii. **4** *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales of medieval Ireland* (1971), pp 5–6. **5** 'Werewolves, cyclopes, *díberga* and *fianna*: juvenile delinquency in early Ireland', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 1–22. **6** *Duanaire Finn*, i, p. xlii. **7** *Early Irish history and mythology* (1946), p. 275.

this suggestion regarding the variety and dispersal of the tradition was based on O'Rahilly's own belief in the divine origin of Fionn and his assumption that such an origin would have been reflected in the appearance of many local variations and traditions associated with the figure.[8] Indeed, one could pursue this point even further by reference to aspects of the nomenclature. In some of these earlier sources, Fionn is referred to as Find mac Umaill or Find Fer Umaill. These may suggest an association with a population group found in the west of Ireland, the Fir Umaill, whose name is preserved nowadays in the toponyms the Owles and Burrishoole in Co. Mayo.[9] Whatever about the local traditions associated with this hero, Murphy pointed out that, during the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, we witness the growth of a unified and broadly accepted depiction of Fionn as what he terms the 'national hero' of Ireland.[10] Fionn is accommodated in the learned prehistory of Ireland, being brought into association with Cormac mac Airt, king of Tara, and being assigned a place in the third century AD.[11]

When Murphy refers to Fionn being a 'national hero', we should point out that, in the context of the time of which he speaks, 'national' has cultural rather than political weight. It can be taken as referring to traditions shared by a people who had a common language and who felt they had a common origin. Political unity, as such, was unknown in the attested history of pre-Norman Ireland. However, we find, in its place, a large degree of cultural unity not only in the written language and its standardization but also in features such as the special status of learned people who were allowed to travel unhindered and without loss of status throughout the Gaelic world.[12] The idea of a unitary kingship, centred in Tara, while not a reality of that time, was one that was maintained in the literary tradition and was seen as belonging to an idyllic past.[13] This is also reflected in traditions such as *Lebor gabála*, a text that provides an origin-legend for the Irish and grafts an Irish branch onto the tree of world history as seen through the Old Testament.[14]

Few would disagree that the text most central to the Finn Cycle is *Acallam na senórach* (*AS*).[15] This lays down the foundations for subsequent *fiannaigheacht* traditions. Not only does it cement the cycle's *tempus* (third century AD) and *locus* (Allen, Tara and the wider Gaelic world), but it also delineates the main *dramatis personae*, their personalities and to some extent their roles within the

8 Ibid., pp 271–81. **9** On this point see Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. lxxx, n. 7. **10** *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. lxxxvi. **11** Ibid., p. lxi. **12** See T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (2000), pp 512 and 583. **13** See F.J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (1973), pp 48–69. **14** R.A.S. Macalister (ed. and trans.), *Lebor gabála Érenn*, 5 vols (1938–56). See also Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings*, pp 9–10; R.M. Scowcroft, '*Leabhar gabhála*, part II: the growth of the tradition', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 1–66 at 63; K. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature* (1990), pp 66–7. **15** W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438.

literature. The *fianna* are the *Fianna Éireann*, not the *Fianna Laighean* or the *Fianna Mumhan* or any such local designation. The role of the *fianna* as quasi-guardians, facing formidable adversaries who come from overseas to subjugate Ireland or to demand tribute from its inhabitants, is already found in a number of episodes in *AS*.[16] This is precisely the role in which we find the *fianna* in the later and somewhat burlesque tales *Eachtra Bodaig an Chóta Lachtna*[17] and *Tóruigheacht an Ghiolla Dheacair*,[18] and in several ballads.[19] Indeed, in his attempt to show the hero, Fionn, in a negative light, while at the same time extolling the youthful hero, Diarmaid ó Duibhne, the author of *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* inverts this very feature by having Fionn invite the formidable mercenaries, the *rí-fhéinnidh Mhara nIocht*, to come to Ireland to seek his adversary, and it falls to Diarmaid to ward off this overseas threat for which his nemesis was responsible.[20]

Association of Fionn with Irish toponymy is already found in the *Dinnshenchas Érenn* tracts, but it is brought even further in *AS*. The use of *dinnsheanchas* here serves as a mechanism that permits St Patrick and the surviving *fianna* to travel throughout much of Ireland and allows the author to leave the imprint of *fiannaigheacht* on the toponymy. The use of *dinnsheanchas* also allows material to be added or removed without affecting the narrative. As such, *AS* could be adapted to suit different places and audiences throughout Ireland and can be seen as a text with national rather than local significance.

Apart from the pre-Norman fragments discussed by Meyer and Murphy, a small number of ballads found in the Book of Leinster,[21] and a somewhat larger collection contained in the Book of the Dean of Lismore,[22] our earliest sizeable corpus of *fiannaigheacht* material comes to light in the Low Countries in the early seventeenth century. This material consists of manuscripts brought there by emigrants from Ireland and material freshly transcribed or written in Flanders. To the former category belongs Dublin, University College, OFM, MS A4, containing a copy of *AS*, penned in Ireland as early as the fifteenth century;[23]

16 See, for instance, Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 1246–309, 3114–93 and 6469–526. This theme is also found in some late tales of the Ulster Cycle: see P. Mac Cana, 'The influence of the Vikings on Celtic literature' in B. Ó Cuív (ed.), *The impact of the Scandinavian invasions on the Celtic-speaking peoples* (1962), pp 78–118 at p. 82. **17** S.H. O'Grady (ed. and trans.), *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols (1892), i, pp 289–96. **18** Ibid., pp 257–75. **19** See, for example, Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, poems LIX, LXII, LXIII. **20** N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967), l. 543ff. On this point see also R. Ó hUiginn '*Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*', *Maynooth University Record* (2000), 159–62 at 161. **21** R.I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (1954–83), iv, ll. 28620–964 ('Ligi Guill i mMaig Raigni'), 29089–300 ('Óenach indiu luid in rí'), 29301–92 ('Dám thrír táncatar ille'), 29415–30 ('Bec innocht lúth mo da lua') and 29431–50 ('Fúit go bráth'). See further n. 2 above and Murphy, *The Ossianic lore and romantic tales*, pp 20–5. **22** D.E. Meek, 'The corpus of heroic verse in the Book of the Dean of Lismore' (1982). **23** See M. Dillon et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Franciscan Library Killiney* (1969), pp 10–12.

to the latter belongs OFM, MS A20, containing another copy of *AS,* in addition to the sixty-nine *fiannaigheacht* ballads, or lays, that make up *Duanaire Finn* and an incomplete portion of another *fiannaigheacht* tale, all of which were transcribed from previously existing sources in Flanders between 1626 and 1627.[24] The importance of this body of literature cannot be overstated. It includes two of the five earliest surviving copies of the oldest recension of *AS* in addition to the largest early collection we have of ballads, many of which are not found in any other source.

Fiannaigheacht literature, of course, constitutes only part of the extensive corpus in Irish brought to or written in Flanders in the early seventeenth century. This corpus also contains a wide range of historical and hagiographical texts, in verse and in prose. In the Book of the O'Conor Don, we have the largest single collection of Classical-Irish poetry that has been transmitted to us.[25] Obviously, there are some questions that can be asked about this material: how and why did it come into existence, and what function, if any, did it serve in the émigré community in which it was found? Given its extent and the range of literary genres represented therein, one might suppose that it is simply a promiscuous collection of various texts that made their way to Flanders with the large number of Irish who entered into military service there in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[26] Their function, it could be argued, was one of simple entertainment or as texts that served as a memory of home. Closer examination of their background and context, however, suggests that this collection had a certain dynamic of its own.

The circumstances which led to an Irish community establishing itself in the Low Countries at this time have been well-documented. In the first place, this movement was due to developments in Ireland, in particular the unfavourable outcome of the Nine Years War, culminating in the battle of Kinsale (1601) and the treaty of Mellifont (1603), which in turn led to Chichester's declaration of 1605, applying an English legal system to Ireland and overturning the status Irish custom and law conferred on the aristocracy, the Flight of the Earls (1607) and the plantation of Ulster.[27] Emigration to Spanish Flanders had gained momentum by the end of the sixteenth century and, from then on, many thousands of Irish soldiers and their families fled to Catholic Spain. The establishment of St Anthony's College, Louvain, in 1607, was to provide the émigré Irish with an intellectual centre that was to play a pivotal role in the collection

24 Ibid., pp 39–43. Inventories of books that were in the Franciscans' collection list a third copy of *AS*: OFM, MS A34, item 1, p. 3; item 2, p. 4; item 3, p. 2. I am grateful to Dr Geraldine Parsons for bringing this to my attention. **25** On this see D. Hyde, 'The Book of the O Conor Don', *Ériu*, 8 (1916), 78–96; P. Ó Macháin (ed.), *The Book of the O'Conor Don* (2010). **26** On the Irish community in Flanders see G. Henry, *The Irish military community in Spanish Flanders* (1992). **27** For these events see T.W. Moody et al. (eds), *A new history of Ireland*, iii (1976), chs 4 and 7.

and transmission of Irish literature.[28] The bulk of the surviving Irish literature taken to or written in Flanders in the first half of the seventeenth century is found in two repositories, namely, University College, Dublin (the Franciscan Collection)[29] and the Bibliothéque Royale in Brussels.[30] These are texts that have to do largely with the traditional history of Ireland which includes hagiographical and other religious material as well as legends associated with kings and heroes of Irish tradition. These are precisely the type of materials that were used by historians such as Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and John Colgan in their efforts to document the history of Irish Christianity and civilization from original *fontes* in works such as the Annals of the Four Masters,[31] *Acta sanctorum Hiberniae*[32] and *Acta triadis thaumaturgae*,[33] all written in accordance with the methodology of contemporary European historiography.[34]

Many of the Irish manuscripts drawn upon by the Louvain circle, either in Flanders or in Ireland, were written in Old, Middle or Early Modern Irish and clearly came from the libraries of scholars in Ireland. One area with which much of this material can be associated is Donegal. The convent of Donegal was originally established and endowed by Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill in 1474.[35] Under the patronage of the Uí Dhomhnaill, it flourished for over a century and drew members of their hereditary historians, the Uí Chléirigh, to its orbit.[36] The Uí Dhomhnaill of Donegal had a strong sense of their own importance and sought to aggrandize themselves using a variety of means: as well as endowing churches, they employed Scottish gallowglass mercenaries,[37] engaged in strategic marriage alliances and, in particular, made use of traditional literature and learning. Such practices were not unusual in Gaelic Ireland, but Muintir Dhomhnaill were certainly among the most prominent in their employment, especially in the use of tradition for their own propaganda purposes. Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh's remarkable Life of the later Aodh Ruadh (1572–1602),[38] written in a highly archaic register, is one of the last of such texts to issue from this sphere of influence, but it is one that did not grow out of a vacuum.

28 On the establishment of St Anthony's College and its importance see N. Ó Muraíle (ed.), *Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, his associates and St Anthony's College, Louvain* (2008), chs 21, 24, 26 and 29. **29** On this collection see Dillon et al., *Catalogue*, pp ix–xv. **30** J. van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, i (1901), pp 218–21, and vii, pp 45–8. **31** J. O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, 7 vols (1848–51). **32** J. Colgan, *Acta sanctorum veteris et maioris Scotiae, seu Hiberniae* (1645). **33** J. Colgan, *Triadis thaumaturgae seu divorum Patricii, Columbae et Brigidae* (1647). **34** On this point see B. Ó Buachalla, '*Annála ríoghachta Éireann* agus *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*: an comhthéacs comhaimseartha', *Studia Hibernica*, 22/23 (1982–3), 59–106. **35** The foundation of the monastery is noted in O'Donovan, *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, iv, pp 1086–7. **36** See B. Jennings, 'The Ó Cléirighs of Donegal' in Ó Muraíle, *Mícheál Ó Cléirigh*, pp 19–23. **37** On this point see C. Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland* (1994), pp 275–6. **38** P. Walsh (ed. and trans.), *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, 2 vols (1948 and 1957). See also P. Ó Riain (ed.), *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh* (2002).

Since at least the late fifteenth century, the Ó Domhnaill family had been engaged in a process of recovering and collecting early Irish manuscripts. Four years prior to the establishment of the Franciscan monastery in Donegal, Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill (*c.*1427–1505) had made a raid on the O'Connor stronghold of Sligo and returned *Lebor na hUidre* and another manuscript, *an Leabhar Gearr*, to Donegal, whence they had been taken to Connacht over a hundred years previously.[39] In 1522, his son, Aodh Dubh Ó Domhnaill, purchased the manuscript known as the Book of Ballymote, which contains a great collection of genealogical material, for the not-inconsiderable sum of one hundred and forty milch cows.[40] These are just two recorded instances of manuscript acquisition, but we know that, throughout the sixteenth century, a process of gathering manuscripts was engaged in and, by the end of that century, whether with the Franciscans or in other centres of learning under Ó Domhnaill patronage, south Donegal housed a very fine collection of Irish texts.

Such manuscripts as were collected were viewed not simply as ornaments to adorn the shelves of Ó Domhnaill's stronghold, however much such an extensive library might had added to one's prestige. They were original sources to be used in other ways by the scholars and historians of Muintir Dhomhnaill. *Lebor na hUidre* was indeed a prestigious manuscript but, for Muintir Dhomhnaill, it had a special value. It contained the oldest copy of a certain text that was of no small interest to them. This was the iconic *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, the hymn to St Colam Cille reputedly composed by Dallán Forgaill following the saint's death in AD 597 and accepted by some to be the earliest Irish-language text we have.[41] Second only to Patrick himself, the importance of Colam Cille to the Ó Domhnaill family lay not only in the fact that he hailed from Gartan in their territory, but also in the assertion, as found in genealogical material preserved in the Book of Ballymote and elsewhere,[42] that he was an ancestor of theirs. In short, he was the Ó Domhnaill saint.

The promotion of the cult of Colam Cille was clearly one of the projects being pursued by Muintir Dhomhnaill in the sixteenth century and their scholars were engaged in collecting materials associated with him. The presence of Columban materials in manuscripts that had come to Flanders *ex libris conventus Dungallensis* is further testament to this interest.[43] In 1632, Maghnus, son of

39 O'Donovan, *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, iv, pp 1068–9, s.a. 1470.9. **40** For this see T.F. O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, 28 fasc. (1926–70), xiii, p. 1613. **41** W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Bodleian *Amra Choluimb Chille*', *Revue celtique*, 20 (1899), 31–55, 132–83, 248–89 and 400–37. On the dating see D. Greene, 'Early Irish literature' in M. Dillon (ed.), *Early Irish society* (1954), pp 22–35 at p. 27. This early dating has since been challenged by J. Bisagni, 'The language and the date of *Amrae Coluimb Chille*' in S. Zimmer (ed.), *Kelten am Rhein* (2009), pp 1–12. Bisagni argues that the text as we now have it belongs to the late Old-Irish period. **42** O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue*, xiii, p. 1628. **43** For a list of such manuscripts that apparently came to Louvain from Donegal see

Aodh Dubh, commissioned a life of Colam Cille, *Beatha Colaim Chille,* written in a register that is, by and large, devoid of excessive literary embellishment or archaism and would have been readily intelligible to a contemporary public.[44] An extensive number of sources was used in its compilation, comprising not only *Amrae Coluimb Chille* and earlier Latin and Irish Lives of the saint but also the Lives of other saints and certain texts from the saga literature, as is evident from references within the *Beatha*.[45] It is, moreover, a text interspersed with verse attributed to many different poets. Ó Domhnaill's objectives were to render material originally written in Latin into Irish and to render material in 'difficult' Irish into a register that would be closer to the contemporary vernacular.[46] This clearly was a major undertaking and one for which, in addition to a scholar or scholars having a good knowledge of earlier stages of Irish, an extensive library would have been required. The evident investment of resources and scholarly effort in the composition of *Beatha Colaim Chille* gives us further insight into the patronage of letters given by Muintir Dhomhnaill, the extent of materials available to their scholars and the importance of their lordship as a cultural centre.

An immediate goal of *Beatha Colaim Chille* was to ground Colam Cille in the contemporary Ireland of Maghnus' age and, more particularly, in the Donegal of the sixteenth century which was ruled by the saint's people, Muintir Dhomhnaill. This was achieved by connecting contemporary place-names with deeds or miracles performed by the saint. A further goal was to propagate the tradition that Colam Cille made a prophecy that the people of Conall Gulban would always be ruled by the descendants of Dálach who was eleventh in descent from Conall and the immediate ancestor of Muintir Dhomhnaill.[47] It is hardly fortuitous, then, that two of the earliest manuscript copies of this Life made their way to Flanders with the Irish as they went into exile.[48] Not only

Dillon et al., *Catalogue*, p. xiv. The Franciscan Friary established in 1474 by Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill was destroyed in 1601. It had earlier been plundered and garrisoned by the English, but it was recaptured and repaired by the second Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill in 1592. Thereafter, the friars moved to a monastery on the Drowes. See A. Gwynn & R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses in Ireland* (1970), p. 247; B. Jennings, 'The abbey at Donegal' in Ó Muraíle, *Mícheál Ó Cléirigh*, pp 37–42. **44** A. O'Kelleher & G. Schoepperle (eds), *Betha Colaim Chille* (1918). See also J.E. Rekdal, 'From profile to face: an analysis of the portrayal of Colum Cille in his sixteenth-century Life by Maghnus Ó Domhnaill – *Betha Coluimb Chille*' (1994). **45** O'Kelleher & Schoepperle, *Betha Colaim Chille*, pp xlvi–xlvii. This work appears to have been carried out at Maghnus' castle in Lifford. See P. Walsh, 'Two Franciscan manuscripts and their scribes' in C. Ó Lochlainn (ed.), *Irish men of learning* (1947), pp 160–70. **46** O'Kelleher & Schoepperle, *Betha Colaim Chille*, §10: 'Maghnas, mac Aeda … do furail an cuid do bi a Laidin don bethaid-si do cur a n-Gaidhilc, do furail an chuid do bi go cruaid a n-Gaedhilc di do cor a m-buga, innus go m-beith si solus sothuicsena do cach uile' ('Manus son of Aed … bade put into Gaelic the part of this *Life* that was in Latin, and bade make easy the part thereof that was in hard Gaelic'). **47** Ibid., §§116–17. **48** Dillon et al.,

does the Flanders collection contain these copies of *Beatha Colaim Chille*, but it also has poems and other material in honour of the saint. Glorification of Colam Cille also glorified his descendants who patronized the project.

Promoting the cult of their ancestor-saint was a central project being pursued by the Ó Domhnaill family at that time, but he was not the only ancestor in which they showed interest. The *duanaire,* or poem book, known as *Leabhar Inghine Í Dhomhnaill*, compiled in Flanders in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, contains a miscellany of verse composed in honour of members of the house.[49] On folios 74–86, however, we find a long but incomplete prose-text which details the career and conquests of Conall Gulban.[50] The section of the tale we have is rather rambling. It details the birth and childhood of Conall, son of the legendary Niall Naoighiallach, telling how he got his epithet and outlining some of his boyhood deeds. The text then proceeds to list victories he won against various enemies before he takes control of that part of Ulster that extends from the River Drowes to Lough Swilly, an area roughly co-terminous with present-day Donegal. Unfortunately, the tale is incomplete, but what we have is sufficient to show that it is a typical origin-tale and is concerned with the eponymous ancestor of the Cenéal gConaill of Tír Chonaill and the Ó Domhnaill family itself.

Conall Gulban is a somewhat shadowy figure who is presented in the pre-Norman genealogies as a son of Niall Naoighiallach.[51] Early traditions surrounding him are rather thin on the ground. The sixteenth-century compilation known as the Book of Fenagh, however, contains a number of poems, written in honour of Ó Domhnaill lords, which detail some of the conquests of Conall and portray him as a revered ancestor.[52] This manuscript, transcribed in 1516 by Muirghius Ó Maoil Chonaire from an older exemplar,[53] is mainly concerned with traditions associated with St Cáillín of Fenagh. Recently, Katharine Simms has argued that Muirghius' exemplar may have been an old collection of Ó Domhnaill poetry dating from the late Middle-Irish period when

Catalogue, MSS A8 and A19, pp 16–17 and 37–9. What is perhaps the earliest manuscript copy of this text, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 514, in the hand of Giolla Riabhach Ó Cléirigh, is found with an extensive collection of poetry in honour of the Uí Dhomhnaill and their ancestors. See B. Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish language manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford college libraries*, 2 vols (2001), i, pp 261–74. **49** See P. Walsh, 'The Book of O'Donnell's Daughter' in Ó Lochlainn, *Irish men of learning*, pp 179–205. **50** G. Lehmacher, 'Eine Brüsseler Handschrift der *Eachtra Conaill Gulban*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 14 (1923), 212–69. Another copy of this tale, which breaks off at exactly the same point, is found in Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 131. See N. Ní Shéaghdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland*, iv (1977), p. 56. **51** M.A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (1962), pp 131–2, 163, 164 and 435. **52** W.M. Hennessey (ed.), *The Book of Fenagh* (1875). **53** Witness, for example, 'Sen liubar Chaillin i Fidhnacha roba shompla duin' ('the old book of Cáillín of Fenagh which was our exemplar'): Hennessey, *Book of Fenagh*, p. 372.

their political star was on the rise.[54] Amongst the traditions recounted in the Book of Fenagh is one which tells of Conall meeting his death at the hands of the Masraighe on Magh Sléacht and his subsequent resuscitation after five years by Cáillín, so that he can be baptized, can ordain that his people pay tribute to the Church of St Cáillín and then can be re-interred at Fenagh. Cáillín, for his part, blesses Conall's people and foretells that a great saint named Colam Cille will be born of his seed.[55] The traditions thus recounted in the Book of Fenagh portray Conall not only as a formidable warrior-king and conqueror of territories but also as a Christian who had accepted the true faith.

There is another text which contributes material to this aspect of Conall's biography. This is, of course, *AS* which relates an encounter between Caoilte mac Rónáin and Donn son of Garadh of Clann Mhórna and how they travel north to meet Conall, king of Cenéal gConaill.[56] Conall welcomes them with great hospitality, following which Caoilte informs him about the *dinnsheanchas* associated with certain places in his kingdom. After hunting and killing the formidable pig of Slángha, Conall departs from Caoilte and goes to Uisneach where Patrick is in the presence of Diarmaid mac Cearbhaill, referred to in the text as *rí Éireann* ('the king of Ireland').[57] Conall pointedly goes to Patrick and does homage to him, refusing to submit to Diarmaid 'gurub é bias ós mu cinn a nim a talmain'[58] ('so that he [Patrick] would be above me in heaven and on earth'). Patrick thereupon declares that Conall will have kingship from him and that thirty of his seed will also be kings. Conall then gives Patrick the slain pig and other gifts Caoilte had sent. Following the visit to Uisneach, Conall returns to his kingdom with Caoilte mac Rónáin and is further educated in the *dinnsheanchas* of Tír Chonaill. On parting, Conall expresses his gratitude to Caoilte for the amount of knowledge he has imparted to them which they can relate to those who will come after them.[59] Although not comparable in skills and knowledge to Caoilte, Conall is presented in *AS* as a benevolent king of the Cenéal gConaill who, on the one hand, has received the blessing of the ancient *fianna* and, on the other, acknowledges the authority of Patrick and the power of Christianity.

As noted above, the earlier of the two extant copies of *AS* that have come down to us in the Flanders collection (MS A4) appears to have been written in the fifteenth century.[60] Its early history is unclear but, given its presence among texts that have a strong Donegal connection, there are some grounds for holding that it too may have come through this channel to Flanders. A quatrain

54 'The Donegal poems in the Book of Fenagh', *Ériu*, 58 (2008), 37–53. **55** Hennessey, *The Book of Fenagh*, pp 89–94. **56** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2015–880. In this text, the character is referred to as Conall Mór or as Conall Dearg mac Néill, never as Conall Gulban. **57** This king (†565) is supposed to have lived a century after the Patrician mission. On this anachronism see A. Dooley & H. Roe (trans.), *Tales of the elders of Ireland* (1999), pp xx–xxi. **58** Stokes, '*Acallamh*', ll. 2261–2. **59** Ibid., ll. 2876–7: 'is mór in fis d'fácais acaind ré indissin do lucht deirid na haimsire'. **60** Dillon et al., *Catalogue*, p. 10.

written in the lower margin of p. 40 of the manuscript is followed by the signature of a certain Donnchadh Ó Cléirigh, a surname that suggests that the manuscript was, at some stage, in the possession of the Donegal learned family.[61] As hereditary historians to Muintir Dhomhnaill, the Ó Cléirigh family were their leading propagandists and, doubtless, would have been involved in collecting materials associated with the legend of Conall Gulban and in the propagation of that legend.[62]

This interest in Conall Gulban is also reflected in the Annals of the Four Masters, in the compilation of which both Cú Choigríche Ó Cléirigh and Mícheál Ó Cléirigh had a role. The names Tír Chonaill and Cenéal gConaill are sometimes given in their extended forms, e.g., 'Cenel c-Conaill Gulban mic Néill',[63] 'i t-Tír Chonnuill Gulban'.[64] Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh, a kinsman of Cú Choigríche and Míchéal, likewise practises such 'learned' extension of names in his Life of Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill, e.g., 'do shaorchlandaibh soichenelchaibh Chenéil Chonaill Gulban m Néill',[65] 'do thuidhecht i tír Conuill m Néill'.[66]

Interest in saintly or kingly ancestors was of importance in late medieval Gaelic society where independent lordships jostled for position and status. The fall of the Gaelic aristocracy, however, ushered in new developments in political outlook and thought, chief amongst which was a more modern idea of nation, now to be understood as an aggregate of people linked by faith and fatherland. It has been argued that many of the great historical and hagiographical works of the second quarter of the seventeenth century were compiled in the spirit of this understanding.[67] They represent the historical record of an Irish nation that had adopted Christianity and are based on early sources. Such sources are represented by the genealogies, regnal lists and hagiographical material found in the Flanders collections, as well as by Middle-Irish poems such as 'Ériu ard inis na rríg', 'Aoibhind sin a Ére ard', 'Atá sund senchus righ Érend' and texts such as *Cocad Gaedheal re Gallaib* which dealt with Ireland as a unit.[68] Likewise the Columban

61 Ibid. Donnchadh was the name of Míchéal Ó Cléirigh's father and a poet of the same name composed the poem 'Fuair Domnall oighrecht an enigh' in honour of Mac Suibhne of Fánaid (†1619). This is found in the Donegal miscellany *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 475, fo. 75v). **62** Further evidence of this is found in NLI MS G 131, in the hand of Cú Choigríche Ó Cléirigh (see above, n. 50). In addition to a copy of the tale *Gabhaltas Conaill Gulban*, this manuscript also contains a body of verse concerned with Conall. **63** O'Donovan, *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, i, 258–9, s.a. 641.2. **64** Ibid., s.a. 1561.9. On the practice of 'extending' place-names see R. Baumgarten, 'Placenames, etymology, and the structure of *fianaigecht*' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fíannaíocht* (1987), pp 1–24 at pp 18–20; R. Ó hUiginn, 'Onomastic formulae in Irish' in M. Ó Flaithearta (ed.), *Proceedings of the seventh symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica* (2007), pp 53–70 at pp 61–2. **65** Walsh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p. 2. **66** Ibid., p. 32. **67** See J.H. Elliot, 'Revolution and continuity in early modern Europe', *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), 35–56 at 47–56; B. Ó Buachalla, *Aisling ghéar* (1996), pp 67–98; M. Caball, *Poets and politics* (1998), pp 129–43. **68** See further van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, vii (1907), pp 46–8

material, which once may have served a purely local function in the politics of late medieval Ireland, now contributed to a greater national enterprise.

The second of the surviving Flanders copies of *AS* (MS A20) was transcribed in 1626–7, most probably from the earlier copy (MS A4), for Captain Somhairle Mac Domhnaill. A member of the Co. Antrim branch of Clann Dhomhnaill, Captain Somhairle had had a rather colourful career as conspirator, rebel and pirate before he arrived in Flanders in 1616 and joined the Irish Regiment of the Spanish Army.[69] While he was to gain further renown for his military exploits on the Continent, his commissioning of MS A20, containing *AS* and *Duanaire Finn*, and his subsequent patronage of the collection of Classical-Irish poetry now known as the Book of the O'Conor Don, lend him distinction of a different kind.

It has been argued that the subject-matter of *AS* and of *Duanaire Finn* would have appealed on a personal level to Mac Domhnaill who, in most respects, was himself a latter-day *féinnidh*.[70] This view probably contains some truth, but Somhairle Mac Domhnaill's interest in this material may have transcended the purely personal. Given his close associations with the Louvain Franciscans and the fact that they were engaged at this time in the national projects that were to produce works such as the Annals of the Four Masters, *Acta triadis thaumaturgae* and *Acta sanctorum Hiberniae*, there is a strong possibility that Mac Domhnaill commissioned his own volumes in a similar spirit. I have suggested elsewhere that the meticulously arranged Book of the O'Conor Don is to be seen as a national *duanaire* in which the religious poems emphasize the long tradition of piety among the Irish, while the secular compositions stress the nobility and pedigrees of their leading families, of both native and Old-English stock.[71] *AS* and the related ballads in *Duanaire Finn* can be viewed in a similar manner. At an early stage, Irish tradition had accorded Fionn and his *fianna* a place in the legendary history of Ireland.[72] No text commemorates this part of that history

(MSS 2569–72). **69** For accounts of Captain Somhairle's career see B. Jennings, 'Some documents concerning the scribe of *Duanaire Finn* and his patron' in Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, iii, pp 217–19; P. Walsh, 'The books of Captain Sorley McDonnell', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 30 (1927), 337–51 and 561–8; idem, 'Captain Sorley McDonnell and his books', *Irish Book Lover*, 22 (1934), 81–8; R. Ó hUiginn, '*Duanaire Finn*' in P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Fhiannaíocht* (1995), 47–68; idem, '*Duanaire Finn*: patron and text' in J. Carey (ed.), *Duanaire Finn: reassessments* (2003), pp 79–106; idem, 'Somhairle Mac Domhnaill agus *Duanaire Finn*' in P.A. Breatnach et al. (eds), *Léann lámhscríbhinní Lobháin* (2007), pp 42–53; idem, 'Captain Somhairle and his books revisited' in Ó Macháin, *The Book of the O'Conor Don*, pp 88–102; H. McDonnell, *The Wild Geese of the Antrim McDonnells* (1996), pp 16–32; idem, 'Responses of the McDonnell clan and change in early seventeenth-century Ulster' in T. O'Connor & M.A. Lyons (eds), *Irish migrants in Europe after Kinsale* (2003), pp 64–87. **70** R. Gillespie, *Conspiracy* (1987), pp 34–5; Ó hUiginn, '*Duanaire Finn*: patron and text', pp 98–9. **71** 'Captain Somhairle and his books revisited', pp 101–2. **72** Indeed, the death of Fionn ua Baoiscne is recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters. See O'Donovan, *Annala*

more fully than *AS*. It is a composition that at once emphasizes the chivalrous and heroic past of the Irish people and shows how even members of the renowned *fianna* came to acknowledge and submit to the power of Christianity, just as Conall Gulban had done.

In its long history and development, *AS* may have served different functions and have been invested with various meanings by its redactors. The presence, in this text, of material which brings the eponymous ancestor of Cenéal gConaill into contact with both the *fianna* and Patrick and shows him in a favourable light would have invested *AS* with a special value for Muintir Dhomhnaill. As suggested above, there is some evidence to suggest that MS A4 may have been in one of their centres of learning prior to coming to the Continent. Such local interests, however, belonged to the late medieval world and, in the aftermath of the battle of Kinsale, they were losing their political relevance. In the new world in which Gaelic Ireland had to make its way, a wider national interest now assumed greater importance. The *fiannaigheacht* compendium that is MS A20 may have been compiled, not out of any sentimental or antiquarian interest, but in the spirit of an emerging nationalism that was to grow in the course of the seventeenth century.[73]

rioghachta Eireann, i, 118–21, s.a. 283.2. **73** Certain other aspects of this literature – commemorating, as it does, the exploits of a band of warriors who were called upon to defend Ireland – would also have had a resonance for the soldiers of the Irish Regiment in Flanders. On this see R. Ó hUiginn, 'Irish literature in Spanish Flanders' in T. O'Connor & M.A. Lyons (eds), *The Ulster earls and Baroque Europe* (2010), pp 349–61.

Tadhg Ó Cianáin: spaghetti *fiannaigheacht*

Mícheál Mac Craith

In the aftermath of his defeat at the battle of Kinsale on 3 January 1602,[1] Aodh Ó Néill submitted to Lord Deputy Mountjoy on 3 April 1603, abandoning his Gaelic title (Ó Néill) and reverting to his English designation as earl of Tyrone. Constant harrassment by crown officials, however, angered at the generous terms offered him, rendered Ó Néill's position more and more untenable. On 14 September 1607, he set sail from Lough Swilly for the Continent, accompanied by Rudhraighe Ó Domhnaill, recently created earl of Tyrconnell, and ninety-seven followers. Almost immediately, Sir Arthur Chichester, Mountjoy's successor as Lord Deputy, referred to this event as the 'Flight of the Earls', and it has been known as such in Irish history ever since. In the fugitives' entourage was one Tadhg Ó Cianáin, a member of a hereditary Gaelic learned family. Ó Cianáin composed a narrative of the Irish lords' travels from their departure until the end of November 1608. As the last seven months of this period were spent in the eternal city, Ó Cianáin's journal offers many interesting insights into the world of Counter-Reformation and Baroque Rome, and into the Irish exiles' engagement with this world.[2]

On 12 June 1608, Aodh Ó Néill and Rudghraighe Ó Domhnaill made the pilgrimage of the Seven Roman Basilicas, an ancient custom that was restored to popularity by St Philip Neri in 1552. Ó Cianáin's account of the Irish princes' pilgrimage continues with a visit to the Church of S. Onofrio on the Gianiculum hill. This is somewhat unusual, given that this church did not form part of the pilgrimage route. In fact, Ó Cianáin's concluding remarks on the pilgrimage proper give the impression of closure to this particular section of his narrative:

> I bhfoircionn an turais mhórlóighidheachta sin éirighid na maithe-se dia bpálás. Oirisid agus comhnaighid ag léigean a scíse agus a meirtin a haithle a dturais neoch ba subháilceach dia n-anamannaibh agus ba saothrach dia gcollaibh.

1 All dates in this article follow the New Style Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 and adopted by the Catholic countries of Europe. **2** See further N. Canny, 'The Flight of the Earls, 1607', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17 (1971), 380–99; J. McCavitt, 'The Flight of the Earls, 1607', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29 (1994–5), 159–73; idem, *The Flight of the Earls* (2002); idem, *The Flight of the Earls: an illustrated history* (2007); D. Edwards, 'The plight of the earls: Tyrone and Tyrconnell's "grievances" and crown coercion in Ulster, 1603–7' in T. O'Connor & M.A. Lyons (eds), *The Ulster earls and Baroque Europe* (2010), pp 53–76.

> At the end of this highly meritorious pilgrimage, the princes went to their palace. They stayed and rested, recovering from their weariness and fatigue, after their pilgrimage, which was pious for their souls and laborious for their bodies.[3]

If the quotation above gives the impression of closure, the subsequent sentences, introducing the church, convey the impression of a new section:

> Laibheóram beagán briathar ar eólas na Rómha anso síos mar is fearr fuaramar fria scrúdadh é agus sinn ag ionatacht isin Róimh fri aimsir imchéin anosa. Atáid sé teampaill ar dhá fhichid ar dhá chéad teampall innti gan na seacht bprímheagailse do labhramar do chomhaireamh orra sin. Aon díbhsidhe teampall roidheas atá for foradhchnoc ard aoibhinn ar comhgar an pháláis i n-a mbuí comhnaidhe na dtighearnadh so, Honofrius a chomhainm, suas ó dheas go coimhdhíreach ó gheabhta S. Spiritus. Radharc agus faircsin na Rómha uile as gusan dTibir ag ascnamh agus ag céimniughadh tríthe, fós radharc méide áirighthe do shliabh Alpa agus don Eadáill móirthimcheall na cathrach. Ameno comhainm an chnuic áirighthe don sliabh for ar tógbhadh an eaglas. Ord Benedict is sámhadh agus is coimhthionóil innte.
>
> Here below we shall say a few words on the description of Rome, as best as we have learned it by examining it, having lived in Rome for a long period now. There are two hundred and forty-six churches in it, without counting among these the seven chief churches we have spoken of. One of these is a very beautiful church situated on a beautiful high hill near the palace where these lords lived, Sant'Onofrio is its name, lying exactly southwards from the gate of Santo Spirito. There is a view and sight of all Rome from it, the Tiber flowing and advancing through it, with a view also of a certain portion of the Alps and the part of Italy around the city. Amoeno (Ameno) was the name of the particular eminence of the mountain on which the church was built. The congregation and community in it is the Order of St. Benedict.[4]

It is interesting that Ó Cianáin draws attention to the time-lag between the actual visit to S. Onofrio and the act of writing. We know, for example, that the Irish princes visted Loreto on 21–3 April 1608, but an interpolation in the text indicates it was at least eight months before the narrator penned his account of the visit.[5] The writing of the account of S. Onofrio, therefore, would have

3 N. Ó Muraíle (ed. and trans.), *Turas na dtaoiseach nUltach as Éirinn* (2007), 7.75, pp 342–3. References to this volume take the form of section number and page(s). **4** Ibid., 7.76, pp 342–3. **5** Ibid., 5.75, p. 252: 'Tadhg Ó Cianáin do scríobh agus tabhairse míle beannacht

taken place later again. Ó Cianáin himself notes the proximity of the church to the princes' residence in the Palazzo dei Penitenzieri. The Irishman does not normally draw attention to the scenic beauties of the places he visited, but this exception is understandable given that, even today, visitors are highly impressed by the panoramic view of Rome that is visible from the grounds of S. Onofrio. Ó Cianáin has surely over-reached himself, however, in claiming that a portion of the Alps are visible from this vantage point and, while the text clearly states *do shliabh Alpa*, it is more than likely that he intended to refer to the Colli Albani, the Alban Hills. The use of the word *amoeno/ameno*, the Italian for 'beautiful', may indicate that the Irishman had consulted a guidebook to Rome. At any rate, it is interesting that Andrea Palladio's guide describes the church as located between the Porta Settimiana and Porta Santo Spirito on a pleasant hill, *sopra del colle ameno*.[6] The 1595 edition of the successor to Palladio's book locates the church 'sopra l'amoeno colle del monte Gianicolo verso il Vaticano, vicino alla porta di Santo Spirito in Saesia' ('on the beautiful Gianiculum hill in the direction of the Vatican, near the gate of Santo Spirito in Sassia').[7]

A more plausible explanation than proximity for the Irish party's visit to this church on 12 June resides in the fact that this particular date is the feastday of St Onuphrius/Onofrio, a fourth-century hermit who dwelt in the Egyptian desert, reputedly clothed only in his own hair.[8] A discernible pattern in the Roman section of Ó Cianáin's narrative indicates that Ó Néill's visits to Roman churches occur on the feastday of the patron saint. His visit to S. Pietro in Vincoli takes place on 1 August, the feast day of St Peter in chains, and only four days after the death of Ó Domhnaill. He visits S. Bartolomeo on Tiber Island on 24 August, the feast of St Bartholomew. Similarly, S. Michele in Borgo is visited on 29 September, the feast of St Michael the Archangel, while S. Maria Rotonda, the Pantheon, is visited on 1 November, the feast of All Saints. In each case, the date is given without specifically mentioning the particular feast, as if Ó Cianáin presumed that his readers would be able to draw the desired conclusion. The only exception to this pattern is the feast of St Francis on 4 October, where Ó Cianáin specifically mentions both date and feast in 1607 and 1608. This exception, however, should be considered in the light of the heightened emphasis given to all things Franciscan throughout the text.[9]

for a anmain et cetera 1609'. **6** *Descritione de le chiese, statíoní, indulgenze & relíquíe de Corpí Sanctí, che sonno ín la cítta de Roma* (1554), unpaginated. **7** [No author], *Le cose maravigliose dell'alma città di Roma* (1595), p. 38. My own translation. **8** See C.A. Williams, *Oriental affinities of the legend of the hairy anchorite* (1926); J.-M. Sauget, 'Onofrio' in I. Vizzini et al. (eds), *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, ix (1967), pp 1187–97. That there was some knowledge of S. Onuphrius in fifteenth-century Ireland is indicated by a fragment printed in R. Atkinson (ed.), *The passions and the homilies from Leabhar Breac* (1887), pp 55 and 293–4. I would like to thank Dr Edel Bhreatnach for drawing my attention to this reference. **9** See M. Mac Craith, 'Franciscan echoes in a prominent early 17th century travel narrative: a "Flight of the Earls" miscellany', *Archivum Franciscanum historicum*, 102 (2009), 243–63 at 247–63.

A dilemma still remains, however: did Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill actually visit S. Onofrio on 12 June 1608? Patronal feasts were also station days in Rome with extended solemn liturgies. Notwithstanding the expression of their personal piety, these special ceremonies would have provided the exiled Irish princes opportunities to present themselves as exemplary godly princes of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and to exploit public space in order to draw attention to the reasons for their presence in Rome. Alternatively, did Ó Cianáin insert the account of their visit immediately after the pilgrimage to the Seven Basilicas so that it would concur with the pattern of visiting churches on patronal feastdays, a pattern that recurs throughout the narrative? Apart altogether from S. Onofrio's proximity to the Irish princes' residence, the logic of the narrator's concluding words about the Irish lords' tiredness after their pilgrimage would suggest the latter alternative. This would suggest also that, far from being a mere passive recorder of the earls' movements in chronological order, Ó Cianáin reflected on the best use he could make of his materials. The period between the occurrence of the event and the chronicler's recording of it gave him ample time for reflection. Rather than initiating a pattern of patronal visits, it is more probable that the ascription of the visit to S. Onofrio on 12 June represents a retrospective imposition of such a pattern that did not really commence until Aodh Ó Néill visited S. Pietro a Vincoli on 1 August.

S. Onuphrius was quite popular in early modern Europe.[10] S. Francesca Romana, to whose canonization ceremony (on 29 May 1608) the Irish earls were invited as special guests of the pope, was particularly devoted to him.[11] In the early days of his conversion, St Ignatius of Loyola deliberately neglected the care of his person in a literal imitation of S. Onuphrius, before realizing that internal inspiration was much more important in spiritual development than external imitation.[12] Artists such as Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652) and Luca Giordano (1634–1705) depicted the saint in various poses.[13] The cult of S. Onuphrius was brought to the west during the time of the crusades, and the church was founded by Blessed Nicholas da Forca Palena in the fifteenth

10 See M.C. Celletti, 'Onofrio, iconografia' in Vizzini et al., *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, ix, pp 1197–200. **11** While Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill are normally referred to as 'the earls' in English, Ó Cianáin uses the word *iarla* solely in reference to Ó Domhnaill. He always designates Aodh Ó Néill by his Gaelic title (Ó Néill). When referring to the two men collectively, Ó Cianáin uses the words *maithe* or *tighearnaidhe*. While Ó Muraíle tends to translate both words as 'princes', the former would be more accurately translated as 'nobles', the latter as 'lords'. For the Irish nobles' presence at the canonization of S. Francesca Romana see M. Mac Craith, 'Early modern Catholic self-fashioning: Tadhg Ó Cianáin, the Ulster earls and Santa Francesca Romana (1608)' in O'Connor & Lyons, *The Ulster earls in Baroque Europe*, pp 242–61. **12** See P. de Leturia, 'El influjo de San Onofre en San Ignacio a base de un texto de Nadal', *Estudios Ignacianos*, 1 (1957), 97–111 at 102; J.N. Tylenda, *A pilgrim's journey* (2001), esp. pp 64–5. **13** Celletti, 'Onofrio, iconografia'.

century, work beginning on its construction in 1439. It was inhabited by a group of monks known as Gerolamites because of their adherence to the rule of St Jerome. An indication of the popularity of the church was the necessity to build a steep stairway descending to the Tiber in 1446, with the addition of a further road in the direction of St Peter's in 1588. Pope Leo X had S. Onofrio designated as one of the cardinal deacon churches of Rome in 1517.[14]

Ó Cianáin gives us none of this information but proceeds to narrate a very lengthy account of the life and miracles of the saint. It could be reasonably argued that this material interrupts the flow of the narrative for the taste of a modern reader. Tomás Ó Fiaich actually omitted this section from the edition of Ó Cianáin's work that he produced with Pádraig de Barra,[15] claiming that it contained little more than a second-hand account of how the Church of S. Onofrio was named. Why Ó Cianáin felt the need to incorporate this narrative into his text and what his source was are questions still to be addressed.

If one enters the cloister of S. Onofrio, to the right of the church entrance, the answers become clearer. The walls of the cloister contain a series of twenty-seven frescoes, in the shape of lunettes, depicting episodes from the life of the saint.[16] An initial fresco indicates that these paintings were commissioned for the Jubilee Year of 1600, and we know that they were painted by Giuseppe Cesare, better known Cavalier d'Arpino (1568–1640),[17] Vespasiano Strada (1582–1622) and Claudio Ridolfi (1560–1644). Even a cursory comparison of the scenes in the lunettes with Ó Cianáin's narrative suggests that the Irishman based his account completely on this series. This is interesting in light of Ó Cianáin's general lack of reaction to the works of art he encountered on his travels. Bramante's Tempietto, for example, the jewel of the Renaissance, is dismissed as 'a beautiful chapel … in the exact spot where Peter was put to death' – Ó Cianáin here choosing to emphasize the numerous indulgences that could be gained by visiting the Tempietto.[18] Similarly, Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses in S. Pietro in Vincoli merits but two adjectives from the Irish chronicler: 'pioctúir Mhaoise meic Amhra iar n-a tharraing go hinntealachtach finéalta i marmair' ('a picture/representation of Moses, son of Amhra, skilfully and finely executed in marble').[19]

The narrative cycle of St Onuphrius is the only place where Ó Cianáin really engages with the artistic creations he observed. Furthermore, a number of the Latin and Italian explanations accompanying the lunettes have been eroded with the passage of time, obscuring our comprehension at key points in the unfolding

14 See M. Armellini, *Le chiese di Roma dal secolo IV al XIX* (1891), p. 659; C. Hülsen, *Le chiese di Roma nel medio evo* (1927), p. 542. **15** P. de Barra & T. Ó Fiaich (eds), *Imeacht na nIarlaí* (1972), p. 162, n. 1. **16** Sauget, 'Onofrio', pp 1196–7; Celletti, 'Onofrio, iconografia', pp 1199–200. **17** Cesare d'Arpino's participation in this series has been disputed. See A.A. Witte, *The artful hermitage* (2008), p. 137, n. 617. **18** Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.55, p. 333. **19** Ibid., 8.21, pp 376–7.

of the narrative. In each case, the lacunae can be filled by referring to the Irish text. The version of St Onuphrius' life represented on the cloister walls and narrated in seventeenth-century Irish contains much legendary material and, as such, seems to be in striking contrast with the new rigour in hagiography demanded by humanists and reformers alike, and later endorsed by the Council of Trent. It seems a very clear instance of the time-lag between the enactment of reform legislation and its implementation, with the demands of a good narrative taking precedence over historical veracity. The lunettes of S. Onofrio are based on a *Vita* found in a fifteenth-century manuscript containing early seventeenth-century interventions, *Vita mors miraculi Sti Honuphrij regis Persarum filii*. This manuscript, mentioned in an inventory of the library of S. Onofrio in 1598 but now housed in the Vatican Library, differs from the standard account of St Onuphrius' life as narrated in the *Patrologia Latina*, in recounting miraculous events relating to the saint's birth and childhood.[20]

The first four frescoes relate the story of Onuphrius' miraculous birth. The king and queen of Persia were childless and prayed fervently to God to remedy their situation. The devil, disguised as a pilgrim, arrives at court. He informs the king of his wife's pregnancy but suggests that he is not the father. There is only one way to ascertain the king's paternity. As soon as the baby is born, he is to be thrown into the fire. If it is really the king's child, he will emerge unscathed. Enraged, the king acts on this advice, but the child is unharmed by the fire. An angel rebukes the king and orders him to have the child baptized and to name him Onuphrius. Ó Cianáin not only follows this narrative closely but also seems to adhere faithfully to the very details of the frescos. The third lunette shows the male infant landing in the fire on his two knees, while his hands are joined together in a praying position (see figure 11.1). Ó Cianáin relates the event as follows:

> Tarla an mac ar a dhá ghlún go díreach isin teinidh. Féachais uasa. Tógbhais a dhí láimh i bhfíodhair chroise agus umhlachta don Tríonóid neamhdha.
>
> The boy fell straight on his two knees into the fire. He looked up (and) raised his two hands in the form of a cross and in humility to the heavenly Trinity.[21]

The next fresco describes the baptism, while the next shows the king on his knees, offering the infant to a group of monks who seem quite reluctant to accept him (see figure 11.2). The accompanying Latin and Italian explanations are completely eroded and we are fortunate in having Ó Cianáin's account to clarify the situation:

20 Witte, *The artful hermitage*, pp 137–9. **21** Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.83, pp 348–9.

> Éirghis go mainistir d'ord Gerelamo agus riaghal Benedict aca .i. ord díthreabhach. Ro chuir an leanamh dia bhaisteadh. Ro fholáir Honofrius do thabhairt mar ainm air do réir theagaisc agus aithne an aingil. As a haithle tra íodhbhrais agus toirbhiris as a lámhaibh badhéin do thighearna-ab na mainistreach é i n-onóir na Naoimh-Thríonóide neamhdha. Gabhais an tighearna-ab an bronntanas naomhtha sin chuige go sulchair agus níor bha háil leis a chor as an mainistir amach dia oileamhain agus ro bhuí i bhrithchéadfaidh na riaghla go nach tíosadh banscál for bith isteach tar ballaighibh na mainistreach.
>
> He went to a monastery of the order of Girolamo which had the Benedictine rule, (and was) an order of hermits. He got the child baptized (and) ordered that he should be named Honuphrius according to the angels direction and command. After that he granted and offered him from his own hands to the lord abbot of the monastery in honour of the heavenly Holy Trinity. The lord abbot gladly accepted that holy gift, (but) did not wish to allow him out of the monastery to be reared and it was contrary to the rule that any woman should enter inside the monastery's the walls.[22]

The Irish narrative not only makes us aware of the abbot's dilemma, it also allows the spectator to make sense of the next lunette which shows a white hind nourishing the infant for three years, thus resolving the abbot's problem (see figure 11.3). This scene would immediately resonate with an Irish spectator, of course, calling to mind the *fiannaigheacht* tradition that Oisín's mother was a doe. As the late Máirtín Ó Briain succinctly expressed it:

> The knowledge that Oisín's mother was a deer was part of the common oral heritage of Ireland and Gaelic Scotland and given the derivation of his name from a diminutive of the word *os* 'deer' is it surprising that such a cervine origin should be imputed to him?[23]

The next four frescoes depict a miracle that involves the infant monk. Discovering the mother and child, he brings some bread to the divine child. In the first of these frescoes, there is a slight discrepancy between the accompanying Latin and Italian explanations:

> Ambo parvuli sumus. Ego comedo sed tu non comede quaeso.
>
> Both of us are little. I am eating but you are not. Go on and eat.

22 Ibid., 7.86, pp 350–1. **23** 'Oisín's biography: conception and birth' in H.L.C. Tristram (ed.), *Text und Zeittiefe* (1994), pp 455–86 at p. 460. See also the discussion and edition of the poem which underpins this tradition in R. Baumgarten, 'Placenames, etymology, and the structure of *fianaigecht*' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 1–24 at p. 5.

> Ambedue siamo piccoli. Io mangio. Mangia ti prego ancor tu.
>
> Both of us are little. I am eating. You eat as well please.

Ó Cianáin seems to be attempting to reconcile the discrepancy between the two versions in the Irish rendering of the scene:

> A Thighearna, leanbh sibse; meise leanbh oile. Ag so mo bhairghean aráin díbh. Guidhim sibh iar n-a glacadh díbh ná hithidh í ionnamhail agus ithim féin.
>
> O Lord, You are a child; I am another child. Here is my loaf of bread. I beseech You, when You take it, do not eat it as I eat it.[24]

Onuphrius brings some of the bread from Jesus back to the abbot, but it becomes so big and heavy that he can barely carry it. Realizing that a miracle has occurred, the abbot intones the *Te Deum*, and it is immediately taken up by the precocious child. At this stage, the abbot wishes to make Onuphrius superior of the monastery but is prohibited because of his age. The eleventh lunette describes the young boy being instructed by the monks in the eremetical life and then deciding to embrace it for himself. Ó Cianáin more or less adheres to this version of events but omits the detail about the *Te Deum*. Regarding the question of the abbotship, he presents a refusal on Onofrio's part rather than a prohibition because of his tender years:

> Feacht n-ann ro thoghsad an t-ord Honofrius mar uachtarán orra badhéin. Ní ro fhaomhsamh an togha sin. Atbheart go raghadh fó dhiamhraibh agus droibhéalaibh for iarraidh an leinbh chompánta do-rala dó i n-ucht naomh-Muire óighe isin bpáirc ria sunn. Ní ro ghabh toirmeasc.
>
> On one occasion the Order elected Honuphrius as their superior. He did not accept that election, (and) he said he would go into secret and path-less places to search for the child companion that he had once met in the field in the bosom of the holy Virgin Mary. He did not accept refusal.[25]

Arnold Witte finds it highly significant that the lunettes underline the fact that Onuphrius was instructed (*ammaestrato*, *sermone instituto*) in the art of the eremitical life; this was in keeping with the post-Tridentine church's disapproval of freelance itinerant hermits.[26] To be a hermit demanded instruction from an

24 Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.88, pp 352–3. **25** Ibid., 7.90, pp 352–3. **26** Itinerant hermits were quite common in Rome during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, much to the discomfiture of the Tridentine church. The church authorities attempted to

authoritative source; it was not a life to be undertaken at one's personal whim.[27] Ó Cianáin was either unaware of or disinterested in this contemporary application of Onuphrius' decision to become a hermit. He shows his journey into the wilderness as a search for the holy child he had previously encountered. When Onuphrius sets off on his own for the desert, he is guided by a voice from heaven who tells him not to be afraid. It is at this point that both the fresco series and Ó Cianáin's narrative join up with the standard version of Onuphrius' life as recounted in the *Patrologia Latina*:

> Egrediente autem me de monasterio in montana, veni in desertum; cogitansque ut manerem ibi, continuo lumen splendidum ante me, quasi obvians mihi, vidi. Quo viso, valde timui. Idcirco quoque putavi me debere ad monasterium regredi, unde exivi. Extemplo autem de radio praeclari luminis vir aspectu pulcherrimus accessit ad me, et dixit mihi: Noli pavescere, ego enim sum Dei angelus, tibi ad custodiendum ab ortu tuo providentia divina destinatus, ut jubente Deo tecum manerem, et te in hanc eremum ducerem. Perfectus esto, humilis incede coram Domino, cum gaudio labora, cor tuum in omni custodia conserva, vive sine querela, in bono opere persevera. Ego vero te non derelinquam, donec animam tuam in presentiam summae majestatis offeram.[28]
>
> When I left the monastery in the mountains, I came into the desert where I intended to remain. Suddenly, I saw a shining light in front of me on the way which filled me with fear to such an extent that I thought I had better go back to the monastery whence I had come. Then, suddenly, I saw a man of most beautiful appearance come towards me out of that ray of shining light. 'Do not be afraid,' he said, 'I am the angel of the Lord, appointed by divine providence to guard you from your birth, to be with you by God's command and to lead you into this desert. Be perfect, walk humbly in the presence of God, work joyfully, keep guard over your heart at all times, live without complaining, persevere in good works. Rest assured I shall never leave you until I bring your soul into the presence of his Majesty most high.'[29]

Onuphrius' first encounter is with a hermit called Hermeus, not named in the Irish text, who takes the neophyte into his cave. In the corresponding lunette, the Italian is totally eroded while the Latin is little better: '… ubi speluncam palmae et fo … sanct …'. Once more, Ó Cianáin comes to the rescue:

curb the activities of these eremitical figures, seeking, not always successfully, to have them join existing religious orders. Witte has shown how the depiction of the life of S. Onuphrius can be read against this background: *The artful hermitage*, pp 128–36 and 141. **27** Ibid., p. 140, n. 630. **28** J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* (1849), lxxiii: 215. **29** My translation.

> Treóraighis leis é as a haithle gusan duirrtheach ndeirrid ndiamhair, airm i mbui a áitreabh agus a ionatacht do ghnáth. Is amhlaidh iomorra buí an duirrtheach .i. bothnait bheag chumhang fó bhun chroinn chomhaird pailme Oirisid is comhnaighid ann i gcomhaontaidh aroile agus a chéile. Is eadh ba tuara agus ba hacnamhadh dóibh toradh an chroinn pailme do thomhailt maille le fioruisce na tiobraide ros-buí fo bhun an chroinn. Barrghar agus duilleabhar an chroinn is eadh ba himdhídean dóibh for dheardain agus doishín, fuacht agus teas.
>
> He then directed him to the secret hidden house where his usual dwelling and habitation was. This, then, was what the house was like: a small narrow hut at the foot of a tall palm tree. They remained and tarried there in company with each other. Their food and nourishment was to eat the fruit of the palm tree, together with the spring water of the well which was at the base of the tree. The branch and foliage of the tree made a shelter for them against wind and storm, against cold and heat.[30]

After the death and burial of Hermeus, Onuphrius proceeds to live the anchoritic life on his own in his former mentor's cell. The tree provides nourishment for him for thirty years, after which time the hermit sets off once more into the wilderness. Every Sunday, an angel brings him holy communion as well as nourishment during the week (see figure 11.4). He goes about completely clothed only by his own hair. At this stage of the cycle, Onuphrius' appearance and behaviour closely resembles that of the traditional wildman in the woods (*homo silvaticus*), best known in the Irish tradition through the story of Suibhne Geilt.[31] In addition to the *fiannaigheacht* theme mentioned earlier,[32] this may have another point of resemblance that resonated with Ó Cianáin, though the Irishman is careful to point out that Onuphrius' dwelling was beneath the branches of the trees and not in them: 'a áitreabh agus a ionatacht fó bharraibh crann'.[33] While aware of the similarities between Onuphrius and Suibhne, Ó Cianáin is equally aware that Onuphrius is no *geilt* ('madman').

30 Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.93, pp 354–5. With regard to the phrase *gusan duirrtheach ndeirrid ndiamhair*, Dr Geraldine Parsons has pointed out to me that the standard description in *Acallam na senórach* for the accommodation given to Caílte as he travels round Ireland is *tech nderrit ndiamhair*. See W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na Senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438, ll. 2065, 2904, 3110, 4147, 7462 and 7790. As this combination of adjectives is seemingly only used in reference to liminal, wildman figures, it is noteworthy that Ó Cianáin uses the same combination of adjectives to describe another liminal figure, a hermit living in the woods. I would like to thank Dr Parsons for drawing my attention to this point. **31** P. Ó Riain, 'A study of the Irish legend of the wild man', *Éigse*, 14 (1972), 179–206. **32** On connections between the Suibhne Geilt and *fiannaigheacht* traditions see Ó Riain, 'A study of the Irish legend'. **33** Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.97, p. 356.

Thirty years later, when another would-be hermit, Pafnutius, encounters Onuphrius for the first time, he is frightened out of his wits. The Latin is eroded and the Italian text is quite deficient:

> Pafnutio vedendo S. Honofrio tutto peloso lo stima mostro o fiera. Pero teme. Fugge si ascond … ehv … Dio lo chiama fi … sedere.
>
> When Pafnutius sees Onuphrius covered in hair he thinks it is a monster or a wild beast. He flees and hides … God calls him … to sit.

Pafnutius' first encounter with Onuphrius seen in the *Patrologia Latina* version produces a similar result:

> Igitur dum fessus requiescerem, et quam aegre profectus essem cogitatem, virum procul aspectu terribilem vidi, in modum bestiae pilis undique circumseptum; cui tanta scilicet capillorum prolixitas erat, ut corpus illius ipsorum diffusione tegeretur. Pro vestito quoque foliis herbisque utebatur, quibus subteriora remum tantummodo cingebat. Tali viso homine, nimio perterritus sum terrore, anxiatus ultra quam credi potest timore et admiratione, quoniam tam mira forma meis oculis nunquam fuit ostensa in humana specie. Quid facerem ignoravi; sed quantum valui, fugam petii, montemque propinquum concito cursu ascendi; ibique tremefactus corrui, atque me sub frondium densitate a facie illius abscondi, multa dans suspiria. Defeci pene aetate et labore abstinentiae. Hic vero dum me cernebat in monte jacentem, voce nimia clamavit, et dixit: Vir Dei, descende de monte. Noli temere; ego enim sono homo passabilis, tibi similes. His itaque consolatus verbis, mentem recipi, moxque descendi, et ad virum sanctum perveni, atque pedibus ejus me timidus prostravi. Ile quoque quoque me prohibens ante se jacere, Surge, inquit, surge; tu enim es Dei servus, et vocaris Paphnutius, sanctorum amicus.[34]
>
> While I was resting from my weariness and thinking with what difficulty I had arrived there, I saw a man in the distance who was terrible to behold. He was covered all over in hair, just like a beast, and such was the thickness of the hair that his whole body was covered in it. He used leaves and herbs for clothing, and they barely covered his private parts. At the sight of such a man, I was overcome with great terror and upset more than you can believe with fear and astonishment because such a wondrous form had never been shown to my eyes in human shape. I did not know what to do, but, as much as I was able, I took flight to a nearby mountain and climbed it with pounding step; and I ran there trembling and hid myself from his face, breathing heavily. I nearly died from age

34 Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, lxxiii: 211–12.

> and dint of fasting. When he saw me lying on the mountain, he cried out in a loud voice and said: 'Man of God, come down from the mountain! Do not be afraid! I am a mortal man just like yourself.' And so, consoled by these words, I regained my composure and soon came down and went up to the holy man and, fearful, prostrated myself at his feet. He also forbade me to lie before him, saying, 'Get up, get up, for you are a servant of God and are called Paphnutius, friend of the saints'.[35]

Ó Cianáin renders the same scene in the following manner:

> Mar adchonnairc an seanóir an créatúir iomthruagh anaithnidh 's é ar n-a thuighe agus ar n-a iomfholach dia fholt agus dia fhionnfadh óthá a bhonn go a bhathis biodhgais agus iomomhnaighnis agus ros-léig a raon madhma agus ro-theithidh é. Ros-lean Honofrius é. Siris fair i n-onóir na Tríonóide neamhdha furnaidhe agus airiseamh i n-a chomhnaidhe. Dearcais an seanóir i n-a dheaghaidh. Suidhis Honofrius forsa talmhain. Tuigis tra an seanóir gur i modh umhla agus ceannsachta agus neamhurchóide do-róine Honofrius an suidhe.
>
> When the old man saw the wretched, unknown creature, covered with his hair and locks from foot to head, he became frightened and alarmed, and he ran away and fled from him. He asked him in honour of the heavenly Trinity to stand and remain at rest. The old man looked behind him. Honuphrius sat down on the ground. The old man knew then that it was a sign of humility and meekness and innocence that Honuphrius sat down.[36]

The word *suighis* ('he sat') is, of course, a sign of civility in contrast with the constant movement associated with wildmen or madmen in medieval literature. One of the characteristics of Suibhne Geilt during his period of madness is his constant movement.[37] Because of the corruption of the Italian text, it is impossible to know to which of the protagonists the verb *sedere* refers, but given that Ó Cianáin takes his cue from the lunettes, it more than likely refers to Onuphrius. In any case, the fact of Onuphrius sitting down is enough to set at rest the misgivings of Pafnutius (Pamplutius in the Irish text) that he is dealing with a wildman or madman. The *Patrologia Latina* text is of no help in this instance.

An interesting aspect of the lunette in question is the depiction of a house with no explanation given for its relevance to the scene. In keeping with his faithful adherence to the scenes as painted on the walls of the cloister, the

35 I would like to thank Dr Mark Stansbury for helping me with this translation. **36** Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.99, pp 358–9. **37** J.G. O'Keeffe (ed. and trans.), *Buile Suibhne* (1913), §§9, 12, 21, 26, 44, 45, and so on.

Irishman includes it in his narrative, while simultaneously offering a rational explanation for its presence:

> Smuainis i bhfoircionn na haimsire sin tra dol do thaisteal agus do chomhshiobhal gach méide ná ro shiobhal go sin don díthreabh. A mbaoi ann go n-fhaca i ndroibhéal dorcha i n-inmheadhón na coilleadh an duirtheach deirrid deighdhéanmhach. Ba machtnadh adhbhalmór lais.
>
> At the end of that time he thought of going to travel and traverse every part of the desert which he had not travelled until then. As he went on, he saw in a dark, pathless place, in the middle of the wood, a beautiful, secret, well-constructed house. He was greatly surprised by it.[38]

Pafnutius is further reassured when Onuphrius brings him to his cell and, after a period of prayer, a jug of water and a loaf of bread miraculously appear. Again, Ó Cianáin adheres to the narrative thread:

> Iar sin adchonnairc an seanóir an t-aingeal do neimh *go mbairghin agus go mbuidéal fíona* ag toirling ar cúlaibh Honofrius. Ba dearbh lais ó shin suas gur bha duine diadha go ndeighbheathaidh naomhtha é.
>
> The old man saw the angel descending from heaven with a loaf and a bottle of wine (and) alighting behind Honuphrius. He was assured thenceforward that he was a godly man of holy life.[39]

The Irishman specifically attributes the appearance of the food to an angel, a detail that is not mentioned in the explanation under the lunettes. Furthermore, the jug of water of the original becomes a *buidéal fíona* in the Irish version. Whether Ó Cianáin slipped or deliberately decided to invest his text with eucharistic symbolism, it is impossible to say.

Soon afterwards, Onofrio prays that those who offer anything to God in his honour will have their reward. A voice is heard from heaven, saying in Latin 'exaudita est oratio tua' and in Italian 'tua oratione e stata essaudite'. Ó Cianáin narrates as follows:

> Laithe n-aon dóibh ag urnaighthe adchluin an díthreabhach guth an aingil do neimh agus is eadh do ráidh: 'Honofríí, *audita est petitio tua* .i. ro héisteadh h'iarratas'.
>
> One day as they were praying, the hermit heard an angel's voice from heaven, and it said: 'Honofrii, *audita est petitio tua*, that is, Honophrius, your prayer has been heard'.[40]

38 Ó Muraíle, *Turas na dtaoiseach*, 7.99, pp 358–9. **39** Ibid., 7.101, pp 360–1. Italics my own. **40** Ibid., 7.102, pp 360–1.

The corresponding lunette contains a speech bubble, saying 'audita est petito tua', a clear indication of how carefully the Irish chronicler observed the pictorial cycle.

The next four lunettes relate the death of Onuphrius in Pafnutius' presence. The scene is accompanied by angelic visitations which are reproduced in the Irish text, one particular detail receiving special attention:

> Ba héagnach agus ba follas don seanóir ag tearnódh suas do na haingil an dara feacht anam an fhíréin uasail Honofrius ag a iomchar ag dí aingeal díbh i riocht agus i bhfiodhair choilmne gléigile.
>
> Visible and evident to the old man, as the angels turned upwards again, was the soul of the noble, holy, man, Honuphrius, transported by two of the angels in the shape and form of a white dove.[41]

This corresponds to: 'Pafnuzio vede l'anima di S. Honofrio in forma di bianca colomba essere portata dalli angeli e da Cristo in cielo ricevuta'. In contrast, Ó Cianáin omits the detail in one of these frescoes that refers to a voice from heaven, calling to the dying Onofrio in the following terms: 'vieni a me diletta mia'. Not only is Pafnutius distressed at the death of his friend, but he is also concerned as to how he should bury him. Two lions appear on the scene, much to Pafnutius' discomfiture, but when then they weep and begin to lick Onuphrius' feet, he realizes that they are friendly animals and that he has nothing to fear. He gives instructions to the two animals and they dig Onuphrius' grave, a feature not found in the *Patrologia Latina* version. In the Lives of the desert-saints, it is not unusual for lions to dig their graves. The *locus classicus* for this detail occurs in St Jerome's Life of Paulus, the first Hermit, *Vita Pauli primi eremitae*, written in 374 or 375, where St Anthony, the abbot, is helped by two lions to dig the grave of his dead friend.[42] It also occurs in the Life of St Mary of Egypt.[43] Helping animals are a feature of international folklore. They are a frequent occurrence in the Irish hagiographical tradition but are not as prominent in *fiannaigheacht* literature.[44] Nevertheless, in *Duanaire Finn*, poem XIV,

41 Ibid., 7.104. pp 362–3. **42** W.H. Fremantle (trans.), *Jerome* (1892), pp 297–303. **43** J. Stevenson, '*Vita Sanctae Mariae Egiptiacae*' in E. Poppe & B. Ross (eds), *The legend of Mary of Egypt* (1996), pp 51–98. This text was well-known in Gaelic Ireland. Cf. A.M. Freeman, '*Betha Mhuire Eigiptachdha*', *Études celtiques*, 1 (1936), 78–113. This is but one of two versions written by the same scribe, Uilliam Mac an Leagha, and involves much more literary creation and cultural transformation than the other version which adheres more faithfully to the original. Cf. B. Ross, 'Uilliam Mac an Leagha's versions of the story of Mary of Egypt' in Poppe & Ross, *The legend of Mary of Egypt*, pp 259–78. For other versions of the Life of Mary of Egypt in Irish see D. Ó Laoghaire, 'Mary of Egypt in Irish: a survey of the sources' in Poppe & Ross, *The legend of Mary of Egypt*, pp 255–7. **44** For the classic description of the relationship between early Irish hermits and the animal world see R. Flower, *The Irish tradition*

'Fuaramar seilg iar samhain', the two hounds of Fionn help him to kill the ox, Donn.[45] In a story collected by Jeremiah Curtin in the nineteenth century, Fionn's hound, Bran, helps Fionn to kill a hag who used to give a restorative drink to his enemies,[46] while in a story recorded in west Kerry, Bran helps Fionn to escape from the belly of a monster.[47] Whether it was owing to familiarity with *fiannaigheacht* or with Irish hagiographical traditions, Ó Cianáin would have considered the two friendly lions as familiar in his own literary background.

In the final lunette, Onuphrius' cell collapses, the palm tree is uprooted, and the well fills up. An angel comforts Pafnutius and tells him to return home to Egypt, where he writes the life of St Onuphrius. Ó Cianáin concludes in a similar fashion and adds a final prayer to the saint, a prayer that brings to a close the whole section relating to the visit to the Seven Basilicas on 12 June. It is hardly irrelevant that the Irishman's description of the earls' pilgrimage to Loreto also concludes with a prayer. Given that Aodh Ó Néill never envisaged his sojourn in Rome as more than a temporary respite, it is possible to speculate that the Irish princes considered the pilgrimage both to Loreto and to Rome as a unit, with the rest of their visit to Rome as little more than marking time before gaining the requisite permission from the Spanish authorities to continue their journey to Madrid. It bears noting that both Carlo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan and future saint, and Augustino Valerio, bishop of Verona, urged the faithful in their dioceses who were going to Rome for the Jubilee Year of 1575 to make a pilgrimage to Loreto on their way to the eternal city.[48]

Tadhg Ó Cianáin's narrative of the life of St Onuphrius is a very fine example of an encounter between a literary representative of the Gaelic world and Counter-Reformation art. In addition to visual beauty, the scenes in the narrative cycle also contain many points of reference that would resonate with anybody familiar with the Gaelic tradition. The incident referring to the infant Onuphrius being suckled by the white hind would strike a chord with those familiar with the *fiannaigheacht* tradition and Oisín's origins. The reference to the helping lions would resonate with the tradition of helping animals found both in *fiannaigheacht* and in the Irish hagiographical anchoritic tradition. St Onuphrius' wildman image has a reflex in the Suibhne Geilt tradition. Furthermore, the very layout of the lunettes in the cloister of S. Onofrio parallels the pattern of the heroic biography of many medieval Irish literary heroes, including Fionn.[49] On entering the cloister, the lunettes on the right-hand wall, dealing with the

(1947), pp 58–66. An interesting comparison between the attitude of early Egyptian ascetics towards nature and that of their Irish counterparts is found in R.D. Sorrell, *St Francis of Assisi and nature* (1988), pp 14–27. **45** E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), i, pp 30–2. **46** Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, iii, p. li. **47** Ibid., p. xvii, n. IA. **48** F. Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi a Loreto nei secoli XIV–XVIII* (2001), p. 34. **49** See T. Ó Cathasaigh, *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt* (1977), pp 1–23. On Fionn's birth and youth see J.F. Nagy, *The wisdom of the outlaw* (1985).

events leading up to the birth of Onuphrius, could well be described, in Old-Irish terms, as the saint's *compert*. Continuing anti-clockwise, the second wall covers the events in the life of the young Onuphrius, his *macgnímrada*. The third wall depicts the events of the adult hermit in the desert, easily treated under the heading of *echtrai*. While the last component in the schema of the heroic biography is *aided* or tragic death, in the hagiographical tradition, this is replaced with the entry of the saint into heaven[50] – exactly what is depicted on the final wall. While Ó Cianáin was certainly impressed by the beauty of the frescoes in S. Onofrio, links between the events in the life of the saint and elements in his own literary tradition were arguably the determining factors in inspiring him to write this part of his narrative. The trend of making cowboy films in Italy in the later stages of the last century gave rise to the term 'spaghetti western'; with all due apologies for the anachronism, Ó Cianáin's initial reaction to the frescoes in S. Onofrio could well have been 'spaghetti *fiannaigheacht*'.[51]

50 On the application of the heroic biography model to the lives of Irish saints see K. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature* (1990), pp 179–202. **51** I would like to thank the Irish Research Council in the Humanities and Social Sciences for facilitating my investigation of Tadhg Ó Cianáin's Rome through the award of a Senior Research Fellowship.

Duncan Kennedy and his heroic ballads

Anja Gunderloch

Duncan Kennedy, one of the minor figures among the collectors of Gaelic song who were active in the eighteenth century, can lay claim to the unusual distinction of falling foul of both sides in the Ossianic controversy at the same time. As far as we know, he specialized in the collection of heroic ballads, and two collections of his work are extant (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MSS 72.3.9 and 72.3.10). The first collection was put together between 1774 and 1780 and the second between 1774 and 1783.[1] The first collection contains thirty ballads and the second twenty-three; of these, eight are unique to the first collection and three to the second, leaving twenty texts that are shared between the two.[2] The first collection is introduced by a lengthy essay that narrates a kind of history of Fionn mac Cumhail and his companions, especially Oisean. This seems to be derived largely from ballads and stories current in the oral tradition of the Gàidhealtachd at the time.

Not a great deal of biographical information is available for Kennedy. According to Ronald Black, he was born in 1763;[3] thus, his collecting would have been done between the ages of 11 and 20. Charles Rogers gives Kennedy's date of birth as 'around 1758'.[4] His death took place before late July 1836, when a note in the *London Gazette* advertised a meeting to be held in order to appoint a trustee in a sequestration case in place of 'Duncan Kennedy, deceased'.[5] Donald MacLean states that he was first employed as a schoolmaster in Kilmelford but later followed a career as an accountant in Glasgow.[6] While working as a schoolmaster, Kennedy is said to have revisited many of his original informants; it appears that he incorporated some of this material into his second collection.[7]

1 J.F. Campbell (ed.), *Leabhar na Feinne* (1872), p. xviii. **2** For a table of contents see Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne*, p. vi. Campbell printed the material of the first collection in full, but the second collection is represented only by texts that are not in the first and by lines and quatrains that are different from the first. **3** R.I. Black, 'The Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland, ii' (unpublished draft catalogue), introduction to NLS Adv. MSS 73.3.9 and 72.3.10. **4** *The modern Scottish minstrel*, v (1857), p. 284. **5** http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/19404/pages/1386, accessed 15 October 2009. I am grateful to James Brown for bringing this source to my attention. The year 1836 is corroborated in Rogers, *The modern Scottish minstrel*, v, p. 285. **6** *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica* (1915), p. 162. No sources are given for this information. **7** Black, 'The Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland', introduction to NLS Adv. MSS 73.3.9 and 72.3.10.

Kennedy's own poetic skill manifested itself in a number of ways. A lengthy poem, dating to the early 1780s, condemning the American Revolution, indicates that he was strongly loyal to George III.[8] In it, he shows himself to be conversant with traditional imagery of kinship, loyalty and duty, which is marshalled into an argument in favour of retaining the monarchy and existing links with the colonial power. He draws on biblical examples to make his point as well.[9] Indeed, Kennedy had a strong interest in spiritual, as well as political, poetry. The first edition of his anthology of hymns, including some composed by Kennedy himself, appeared in 1786.[10] He published a second edition in 1834.[11] The evidence of the hymns themselves suggests that Kennedy was able to compose following the conventions of style that applied to this genre at the time. John Francis Campbell investigated this aspect of Kennedy's poetic career and got the testimony of a scholar with expertise in both secular and spiritual literature, the Revd Dr Thomas MacLauchlan, who 'said that there was nothing in Kennedy's hymns to distinguish them especially from others of their class'.[12]

Our main concern here, however, is with Kennedy's collection of heroic ballads and with his handling of this material. Both of his collections are neatly written fair copies, not field-notes, and the spelling is quite good by the standards of the time, although accents tend to be in short supply. The first collection seems to have been written for Kennedy, perhaps by his father, who at the moment remains a shadowy figure.[13] The second was written by Kennedy himself. Once the volume was in the possession of the Highland Society, a number of individuals wrote more or less pertinent notes in the margins, often comparing passages of Kennedy's texts with corresponding material in the work of the Revd John Smith of Campbeltown, James Macpherson and other contemporary collectors. Black identifies Dr Donald Smith, the Revd James MacDonald of Anstruther and Donald Macintosh as the experts tasked by the Highland Society with evaluating the manuscript.[14] Occasional minor changes to the texts in Kennedy's hand are in evidence as well. These are generally not represented in Campbell's *Leabhar na Feinne*. Kennedy also provided occasional explanatory notes on the meaning of certain words and lines (which Campbell does print). Moreover, Kennedy is fond of citing biblical passages that seem to illustrate or parallel events narrated in the ballads.

In a letter dated 15 February 1798, Archibald Fletcher informed the Highland Society committee of the existence of collected materials in Kennedy's posses-

8 M. Newton, *We're Indians sure enough* (2001), pp 149–61. **9** Newton, *We're Indians*, pp 149–50. **10** *Co'chruinneachadh laoidhe agus chantaicibh spioradail* (1786). **11** *An laoidheadair Gaelic* (1834). **12** *Leabhar na Feinne*, p. xix. **13** Black, 'The Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland', introduction to NLS Adv. MSS 73.3.9 and 72.3.10. One source states that Kennedy senior was employed as a gardener by MacLachlan of Kilanahanach in Glassary parish: Rogers, *The modern Scottish minstrel*, v, p. 284. **14** 'The Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland', introduction to NLS Adv. MSS 73.3.9 and 72.3.10.

sion, including the two large manuscripts now extant.[15] This, however, was not all that Kennedy had collected:

> The best person I can direct you to for Information respecting these Poems and Songs is Mr D. Kennedy Merch[t] in Glasgow, who when very young had with great assiduity collected many of them, thro' the Continent of Argyle, Lochaber, and the Western Isles, in the years 74, 75, and 76. And who has occasionally ever since been Industrious in picking up any verses of Antiquity that he could meet with.
>
> He has shown me Two large Manuscripts and several small ones, along with a heap of loose and detatched Sheets in an ill state, and ill wrote, as drawn out on Hills, Shiellings, Shores, Peatmosses and Barns etc. which he never was at the pains to transcribe nor publish, on account (he says) he could not pretend to become an Author for want of Good Education, nor make them compare literally with the translation of Mr McPherson nor Dr Smith's; altho' he has many Poems and Passages that will (in part) compare with both. I requested him for the lend of them but his answer to me was, that he was determined not to lend them to any individual. He seems to have in Contemplation still at his conveniency to transcribe them carefully, and publish them in the original, just as they stand.[16]

Kennedy's reluctance to let his material out of his hands can perhaps be explained by a previous experience. In 1778, he lent his first collection to the aforementioned John Smith.[17] Kennedy was later to accuse Smith of using the collection for passages in both his *Galic antiquities* of 1780 and his *Sean dàna* of 1787, without either acknowledging Kennedy's texts as a source or offering him a share of the profits from these two books.[18] Matters soon turned acrimonious, with Kennedy threatening to sue Smith, as Smith himself hints in a letter which was published in the Highland Society *Report*:

> One circumstance, however, I remember well, that a man who had given me the use of a parcel of poems, without any restriction, had long threat-

15 Fletcher was a schoolmaster in Greenock who compiled a partial Gaelic-English dictionary in 1795, now NLS Adv. MS 72.2.17. See Black, 'The Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland', introduction to NLS Adv. MS 72.2.17. It is likely that Fletcher and Kennedy moved in the same Gaelic circles in Glasgow and Greenock; on at least one occasion, Fletcher gives his address as c/o Revd John MacLaurin of the Gaelic Chapel in Glasgow (NLS Adv. MS 73.2.13, fo. 85). **16** NLS Adv. MS 73.2.13, fos. 84–5. The letter is addressed to Mr John MacNab, Writer to the Signet, New Town, Edinburgh. The reference to collecting in the Western Isles is not corroborated anywhere and seems to be in error. **17** See a note, written by Henry Mackenzie, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.13, fo. 69. **18** Letter dated 30 December 1801, from Kennedy to MacKenzie, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.13, fo. 163.

> ened a prosecution for publishing what he called translations of his collection of poems, and alledged he had a claim to a share of the profits. I believe, however, upon enquiry, that he understood the profits to be only a serious loss, as I had been persuaded to run shares with a bookseller in the publication, which to me turned out to be so bad a concern (when my income was but thirty pounds a year) that I could never think of Gaelic poetry with pleasure or with patience, except to wish it had been dead before I was born. The circumstance I have just mentioned, may be construed in favour of the authenticity of these poems; but on the other side, I have to mention that, in my observing the beauty of one or two passages in one of those poems, (I forget which) the person who gave it me as an ancient poem, said, *these were of his own composition*. This assertion I placed then to the account of his vanity; but I think *it right to state it to you as I had it, and leave you to think of it what you please*. I feel no interest in the question, its issue, or in the fate of the poetry.[19]

The question of whether Smith drew on Kennedy's collections remains unresolved. When the Highland Society investigated Kennedy's manuscripts, one of the readers noted similarities with Smith's texts in the margins. It may be, however, that the two tapped into sources with closely related texts; between 1777 and 1781, Smith was based in the parish of Kilbrandon and Kilchattan, adjacent to Kennedy's home-ground. A more interesting revelation to come out of the Kennedy–Smith dispute was Smith's claim that Kennedy had admitted to having composed elements of his collection himself.

Once the finger of suspicion had been pointed at Kennedy's collections, he wriggled for some time, refusing repeatedly to come to Edinburgh to explain the situation. Initially, the Highland Society wanted an affidavit from him, which Kennedy declined to provide. He was, however, adamant that he had collected genuine material from his informants:

> Under these circumstances, (altho' unpolite on my part) I thought it most prudent to keep silent, divulge nothing, and refer the Society to the certified List of Persons sent you, of whom I got from recitation a great part of the Poems contained in my Manuscripts, and flattered myself that all future enquiries respecting them was to have ceased forever. To that List of Reciters I still stand, and feel myself at liberty on Oath & honor to affirm, that I have collected a great part of the Poems sent you by me, from oral tradition of those Persons, whom I have heard retale any Tales & Stories of the Fingalians, and other tribes of Scots & Irish Knights and Warriors of old times, and that some of them correspond with the

19 Letter from Smith to Mackenzie, dated 21 June 1802, cited in H. Mackenzie (ed.), *Report of the committee of the Highland Society of Scotland* (1805), Appendix, p. 89. Italics as in the *Report*.

> Histories of Drs Kennedy, Coyle, Keating, O'Halloran & other Irish Writers who seem to me to be more correct in their Chronology &c. than our Modern Historians who depend on the veracity and impartiality of Romans, Saxons & other Invaders & Ravagers accounts on the Nature of those Countries. In my opinion, common sense will discover this to be the fact, and when we find that the Tales & Poems of the Scots are the same of those with the Irish, and supported by Irish history, we ought to credit it, before the probable opinions of Modern Writers who grovel in the dark.[20]

In the above letter, Kennedy emphasizes his firm belief in the link between his ballads and Irish tradition, which clearly sets him apart from Macpherson. In the end, he consented to an interview in person. In Edinburgh, in January 1806, he answered questions and marked his own material in both collections, using inverted commas in red ink in the second collection, while in the first collection either he used a different ink or the ink has faded. By then, he had also admitted to being the sole author of a number of texts. It was the Revd Patrick Graham of Aberfoyle who winkled the information out of him:

> In October last, I had the good fortune to open up a correspondence with Mr Kennedy, and after some pointed remonstrances of mine, to obtain from him, in his letter of the 25th Oct 1805, a full acknowlegement 'upon his honour, that the following pieces in his Collection (now in the hands of the Highland Society of Scotland) are in whole or partly his own composition: viz. The Death of Carril – entirely his; Most of Bas Ossein,' says he 'I also claim, and considerable portions of the Death of Diarmad, Goll, Oscair, Latha na Leana, Liur, &c. &c.' [21]

Kennedy accordingly marks as his almost all of *Bàs Oisein* and all of the first part of *Laoidh Dhiarmaid*. *Bàs Oscair*, on the other hand, is a composite text made of three different ballads on the subject of Osgar's death, with some additions by Kennedy. I have not yet tracked down texts for comparison with *An Leana*, *Bàs Ghuill* and *Bàs Liur*, so Kennedy's claim may stand for the time being. *Bàs Chairill* is represented by a fragment in the Irvine collection, and by a version in the MacNicol collection.[22] Thus, Kennedy appears to claim this wholly as his own in error. In general, his identification of his own material is less than reliable, and close comparison with other versions regularly turns up parallels to quatrains that Kennedy marked as his own. Conversely, there are many instances

20 Letter from Kennedy to Mackenzie, dated 10 October 1805, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.15, fo. 142. Underlining as in the original letter. **21** Letter from Graham to Sir John Sinclair, dated 1 May 1806, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.25, fo. 62. **22** Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne*, pp 166–8.

where Kennedy failed to mark material that is not paralleled elsewhere. Two main factors may account for this. Firstly, there is the amount of time that had elapsed since collecting and polishing up his texts – Kennedy may have been unable to tell the original material from his own after more than two decades. In 1805, he points this out to Henry Mackenzie, although he clearly is also trying to play down his role:

> It may still be asked of me (as you have once done) what Poems and Parts of Poems I have composed of the many sent you. This you may concur cannot be distinctly done at an elaps of 20 Years. Forget them, accepting a verse here and there.[23]

Secondly, it is clear that a number of people applied a fair degree of pressure on Kennedy to come clean. With this background, it would not be surprising if Kennedy wanted to get this unpalatable business over as quickly as possible and did not fulfil his task with quite as much diligence as Mackenzie had expected.

When challenged by the members of the Highland Society about the authenticity of his texts, Kennedy was probably also reluctant because he worried, quite understandably, about being made into another villain in the acrimonious debate surrounding Macpherson. His eventual consent to comply with their demands is suggestive of a combination of embarrassment and honesty. It is also instructive to look at his underlying motivation. From his collecting, he must have been clearly aware of the existence of different versions. Some of these will have contained material that was not in others, and some texts may have had gaps. Kennedy's original, 'unimproved' texts are likely to be composite ones, taking in material from several sources. This was not an unusual approach at the time; at least some of the ballads in the Gillies collection, for instance, would seem to incorporate material from different versions, since they are remarkably complete, though usually the editors stopped short of adding their own material.[24] In general terms, the supplementation of textual material to close gaps caused by faulty transmission is well in evidence in texts from oral sources and should be regarded as part of the 'repair and maintenance' techniques employed by tradition-bearers through the ages.[25] Such supplementation is generally small-scale and tends to involve no more than a phrase, a line or a couplet at most where there is a gap in the received text. Kennedy goes beyond this and adds material that is designed to embellish the texts, but he himself felt that his contributions blended easily and naturally into the ballads. Graham reports that:

23 Letter from Kennedy to Mackenzie, dated 10 October 1805, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.15, fo. 143v. **24** D.S. Thomson, *The Gaelic sources of Macpherson's Ossian* (1951), pp 31–9. **25** See further A. Gunderloch, 'The *Cath Gabhra* family of ballads: a study in textual relationships' (1997), pp 96–9.

> Mr K. concludes by observing 'that tho' the Genuine Poetry of Ossian is perhaps inimitable, – still a good Gaelic Scholar, of a good ear, and well acquainted with his imagery &c – may compose verses approximate to the excellence of the original, and which not one in a thousand will be able to distinguish from the real.'[26]

To some extent, Kennedy is right in his assessment, and it is clear that he had the requisite 'good ear' and 'feel' for imagery from his forays into other poetic genres, as mentioned above. J.F. Campbell was probably right in asserting that Kennedy's own material is 'easy to recognise',[27] but there are also instances where existing quatrains have undergone partial changes; in such cases, the differences are often of a kind that might have come about in the course of oral transmission, and it is no longer possible to determine in all instances whether discrepancies represent variants which Kennedy collected or additions and alterations which he imposed on the text.

Adaptation of an existing text by supplementing it is a technique that has also been observed in the context of prose storytelling.[28] Kennedy's situation is not untypical. There is a shift in audience: Kennedy took his material out of the oral context of performance in the *cèilidh*-house and presented it in written form for a reading audience. In addition, his provision of explanatory English 'arguments' makes it clear that he was thinking in terms of an educated, bilingual readership who might not be fully conversant with the conventions of oral performance or of the ballad genre, or with the body of lore connected with the ballads. The phrase 'observe the poem' concludes a number of 'arguments' and clearly addresses a reader. In the end, this audience would appear to have remained theoretical until he gave his manuscripts to the Highland Society, although it seems that he was still hoping for publication of his material when he did so. His own role also shifted from collector to transmitter of the texts in this new medium, and perhaps it is justifiable to suggest that his changes were at least partly motivated by a desire to make his texts more accessible in this literate context. I would argue, however, that much of this was the result of Kennedy's poetic instinct and 'feel' for the texts that he was dealing with rather than of any theoretical considerations and clearly defined motives. No evidence is extant to show that Kennedy was a reciter of ballads in his own right, but the possibility cannot be ruled out. He was certainly close enough to the tradition to be able to tap into it as a composer. In many of the changes that Kennedy made to his initial texts, he used a style that is based on common ballad idiom and displays considerable empathy with the genre. This is in keeping with his ability to adopt styles appropriate for political propaganda and spiritual verse, as noted above.

26 Letter from Graham to Sinclair, dated 1 May 1806, in NLS Adv. MS 73.2.25, fo. 62v. **27** A note in NLS MS 72.3.10, p. vi. **28** The twentieth-century American storyteller Ed

Kennedy's enthusiasm for the ballads is obvious in his 'arguments' that preface the texts. To some extent, these are stylistically indebted to Macpherson's English and show, yet again, Kennedy's capacity to slip into a genre and produce at least a credible pastiche of its conventions. An extract from the 'argument' to *Bàs Oisein* in Kennedy's second collection gives some indication of this:

> Ossian discovers by this Poem the strength of Fingal's army when in the height of his glory, and ranges over their actions in war and joy in peace. He regrets in the softest and most pathetic strain, that he is left alone as a bird wounded and benighted in the solitary Woods, longing for the dawn to renew his Joy & lull his grief. Or to a mouldering oak[29] in the desert which is ready to fall by the least blast, without Joy, music, groath,[30] or grandeur. Where is my Friend to lament my fall, and rear my Tomb; & who shall dig my Grave but cruel Aliens? Where art thou, O Fingal! Oscar and Cailte, with all your host? My Days are expired. My time is past. My Friends are extinct. My peace & ease is over. My Joy is done. My pleasure is gone. The grave is my home, so let me now die and live no more.[31]

The names Fingal and Ossian are clearly drawn from Macpherson, and both style and the references to nature are clearly indebted to Macpherson's work. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Kennedy would have produced something much more in keeping with Macpherson's Gaelic in the material he added to his collected ballads had this particular model been available to him at the time of working on his collections. The Gaelic *Ossian* only saw the light of day in 1807, and the other substantial production of Gaelic material that imitated Macpherson, Smith's *Sean dàna*, was not published until 1787. A rendering into Gaelic of the seventh book of *Temora* was published with this work in 1765;[32] this, however, was not incorporated in the revised edition of 1773, and Kennedy may well have had access only to this later edition.[33] Kennedy's main models to follow were clearly the ballads themselves. Given his poetic talent and interest in the subject, his own material is probably to be seen as the result of youthful enthusiasm rather than an attempt at deception. Kennedy hints at this when he notes his age at the time of collecting and describes his methodology (which often involved return visits to his informants):

> I did with much pains and attention, collected and wrote, these Poems among the People, who rehearsed them, much to my satisfaction, in my

Bell, for example, adapted his stories by supplementing them with elaborated or additional passages, depending on audience and performance-setting. See R. Bauman, *Story, performance and event* (1986), pp 90–4. **29** Superscript with insertion mark. **30** Corrected in MS from *groth*. **31** NLS Adv. MS 72.3.10, pp 160–1. **32** H. Gaskill (ed.), *The poems of Ossian and related works* (1996), pp 329–41. **33** Gaskill, *The poems of Ossian*, p. 541.

> youthfull days; when I had made no great progress in learning, as may be judged from the manner in which they are written, altho' this does not affect the subject, or spirit of these poetical pieces. I have however since often been at much pains, and expence, attending the people from whom I got them and others who had heard them, in order to a rehearsal for correctness sake.[34]

Kennedy's remark above highlights that he did not just target reciters but made a point of talking to 'others who had heard them' – in other words, the traditional audience or passive tradition-bearers who, while not necessarily reciters themselves, would be in a position to judge the quality of the texts that Kennedy had collected.

It remains to consider the literary quality of Kennedy's own additions. In my view, he has produced a credible pastiche of the literary and metrical conventions of the genre, with occasional lapses into sentiment reminiscent of Macpherson. *Maire Borb*, from the second collection, offers a good example of a quatrain that is marked by Kennedy as his own and does not appear in any other extant versions in Gaelic Scotland or Ireland. It follows the usual opening quatrain in which the speaker, Oisean, addresses the listeners and evokes the dialogue setting between Oisean and Patrick that is common to many ballads.

> Tha sgeul beag agam air Fionn,
> Cha raibh ann a fear is ceud,
> Air dea' Mhac Cumhaill nam fleagh,
> Leis am bui'nte blagh 's gach euchd.
>
> 'Ailis sin[35] damh Oisein thim,
> ''Laoich is binne bhruathraich beul:
> 'Ciod e 'n gniomh rinn dea' Ri'-phaile;
> 'Triath nam fleagh, nam blar, 's nam beum.'[36]

The new quatrain (the second above) picks up on many conventions of theme, structure and imagery and could easily pass as a quatrain from oral tradition. The addressee of the quatrain, Oisean, is named in the first line and receives some praise in the second, then the speaker, whom we may assume to be Patrick, asks what the particular deed was that the king of Ireland performed. Equating Fionn with the king of Ireland is, strictly speaking, incorrect, but shifts like this begin to creep into the tradition elsewhere as well at this time. Kennedy is back on form with a suitably heroic, and partially alliterating, triplet in the final line. Metrically,

34 Letter from Kennedy to Mackenzie, dated 30 December 1801, NLS Adv. MS 73.2.13, fos. 163–4. **35** Corrected in MS from *sinn*. **36** NLS Adv. MS 72.3.10, p. 21. Inverted commas at the beginning of lines, here and below, indicate that these lines were marked by Kennedy as his own on his visit to Edinburgh in 1806.

we are no longer even in the proximity of the *óglách*as metres of the ballads, but the *aicill* and end-rhyme patterns echo the original *rannaigheacht mhór*.

There are occasional 'Macpherson moments' in Kennedy's own work, as in this example from *Bàs Dheirg* from the second collection which describes the final fight between the Dearg and Goll mac Morna. The comparison text from the Turner collection is a little later but has the advantage of being one of the longer Gaelic versions that are reasonably close to Irish versions of the ballad.[37]

Kennedy's second collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.3.10, p. 39)

58 "Bhuail na Suinn air druim a cheile,
'Gu cruaidh, cuidreach, is cho bhreugach;
'Chreithnich an leirg, 's chlisg na sluaigh,
'Nach d'thigeadh Mac Moirnne uaith,

59 'Bha'n airm liobharra sa bhail,
'Mar theine na nial sa mhagh;
'Dh'ēigh na creagan, sgread na glinn,
'Da'm beumannaibh druim air dhrim.'

60 Lath agus aon trath deug,
A thug na curai'ne sa bheum;
Mun do mharbh Goll nan geur lann,
An Dearg mor a cheart reiginn.

Turner collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.2.7, fo. 5v)

59 Thug an Dearg chum claoidhi Ghuill
Na h airm nimhe bhi n cogguil
'S tigid gu dìomasach dana
Sgu fiochmhur an aite teugbhail

60 An sin chuimhnich am facla
Na fir bhorba bhi mearadh
Aig snaitheadh chlogaid agus lann
Bhi mac Drochuil agus Iolainn

61 Feachain san dioghan san cleas
Ri cheile sa mor threis
Agus thostadh fear Eirin uile
Air claistinn na h iorghaille

62 O an comhraig feadh tri la
Do bu tursach fear agus mna

37 E.g., poem LXIII in E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), ii, pp 298–316.

No gur shoruigheadh an Dearg ann
Le Mac Morna na beumannan.

§§58 and 59 are marked as Kennedy's own composition, and it is clear that they differ completely from the Turner quatrains in mood and style. The Turner version describes the combat in conventional, straightforward terms, whereas Kennedy introduces imagery from nature in the shape of pathetic fallacy, a stylistic device also used by Macpherson.[38] The simile involving fire in §59 is also strongly reminiscent of Macpherson.[39] The description in §58ab, on the other hand, is still relatively close to ballad convention. The reactions of the onlookers, described as silence in §61d of the Turner version, have been transmuted by Kennedy into fear for Goll's success in his §58d. The final quatrain of the passage is traditional and the differences between Turner and Kennedy may have come about as a result of oral transmission. Metrically, the *rinn–airdrinn* rhyme typical of *deibhidhe* (which is still quite well-preserved in the Turner version) has given way to end-rhyme in couplets in Kennedy's additions.

That Kennedy revised his own quatrains and brought them more in line with Macpherson is evident from comparison of the version of *Bas Dheirg* contained in his first collection with that in his second.

Kennedy's first collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.3.9, pp 91–2)

58 Bhuail iad an sin air a chéile,
Gu cruaidh cuidreach, is cho breugach;
Chuaidh 'n leirg air chrith fui' an casaibh,
'S chuaidh teine d' an arma glasa.

59 Bhuaileadh iad gu neartmhor dobhidh,
Mar dha mhuinne bhiodh re cómhrag;
Choi'-éigheadh creagaibh is beanntidh,
Re airm nan curine calma.

60 Se la agus aon tra' déug,
A thug na curine sa bheum;
Mu'n do chlaoidh Goll nam béumaibh,
'N Dearg mór a cheart reiginn.

Kennedy's second collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.3.10, p. 39)

58 'Bhuail na Suinn air druim a cheile,
'Gu cruaidh, cuidreach, is cho bhreugach;
'Chreithnich an leirg, 's chlisg na sluaigh,
'Nach d'thigeadh Mac Moirnne uaith.

38 Gaskill, *The poems of Ossian*, p. 55. **39** Ibid., p. 67.

59 'Bha'n airm liobharra sa bhail,
'Mar theine na nial sa mhagh;
'Dh'ēigh na creagan, sgread na glinn,
'Da'm beumannaibh druim air dhrim.'

60 Lath agus aon trath deug,
A thug na curai'ne sa bheum;
Mun do mharbh Goll nan geur lann,
An Dearg mor a cheart reiginn.

The text in Kennedy's first collection is closer to the ballads. The pathetic fallacy is less pronounced, and the screaming crags and glens in particular can be given the benefit of the doubt because the image in §59c evokes echo. The image of fire in §58d has not yet developed into the Macpherson-style simile 'Mar theine na nial sa mhagh' of the second collection but instead is reminiscent of Gaelic texts, both Scottish and Irish, which describe the fight between the Dearg and Fionn's men. An example can be found in the MacDiarmid collection:

Gith fala, gith cailce cruaidh,
Bhitheadh á 'n sgiathaibh san uair,
Agus gith tein' gu neulaibh
Bhitheadh á lannaibh nam mìlidh.[40]

While most changes and additions made by Kennedy are small-scale, occasionally they are more extensive. For example, in his version of *Mànus* (or 'A chlèirich a chanas na sailm'), he has added an entire episode at the end of the ballad. Traditional versions of the ballad tell of Mànus who came with a fleet from Lochlann, was defeated and was allowed to return home following a promise to keep the peace henceforth.[41] Kennedy, however, has Mànus' followers persuade him to return to Ireland and fight another battle, in which he is killed. In addition, Kennedy has revised this passage in his second collection, adding four new quatrains. The entire passage is marked as his own in the second collection, while only a few lines are shown as his in the first.

Kennedy's first collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.3.9, p. 21)	Kennedy's second collection (NLS Adv. MS 72.3.10, pp 19–20)
63[42] Dh'imich iad an sin a dholbh,	62 'Dh'imich iad na sluaigh gu leir,
Do rioghachd Lochlan nan colbh sean;	'O Riogh'chd Eireann nan colbh sean;
A eagmhuis bean Fhinn 's a choin,	'A eagmhuis Bean Fhinn, 's a choin,
Gu'n bhuill' thoirt le'n loinn do neach.	'Gun arm a nochda' do neach.

40 D.S. Thomson (ed.), *The MacDiarmid manuscript anthology* (1992), pp 172–3. **41** Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne*, pp 78–83. **42** A pencilled note reads: 'He claims the 4 following as his

64 Bha iad fui' aimheal ro mhór,
Air an t-slighe dol d' an teach;
Nach d'fhéuch iad a chúis air chóir,
'S gu biodh fios ac'[43] co bu treis.

65 'Se sin a dubhairt na sloigh
A bhris le mór ghó an reachd
'Ge do bhuadhaich ortsa Fionn
'Gheibh sinne buai' air arm gu beachd.

66 Chuir iad iompoidh air an Righ,
Gu pilleadh a' rís air ais;
An dóchas gu fuigheadh iad buaidh,
Air an t sluagh bu chruaidhe 'n cath.

67 Phill iad an sin dh'ionnsuidh Fhinn,
'S thuirt e re Manus gu' n ghruamaich;
'C' ait am bheil do mhionnan mór
'Fagas le gó fa' r an d' fhuaras.[44]

68 'N sin fhreagair e an laoch borb,
Air am bitheadh colg 's gach ghreis;
'Dh'fhagas e air dhruc an fheóir,
'Air an raon mhór ud mu dheas.

69 Thug sinn an sin deannal cruaidh,
Da cheile gu buailleach cas;
Gus 'n do bhuadhaich sinn gu cuanna,
Air sluagh Mhanuis uaibhreach bhras.

63 'Thog na trein an siuil gu h ard,
'Air gach Barc thainig air lear;
'Mar chuilc loch Leuga bha'n aireamh,
'Triall o'n trai' san airde near.

64 'Bha na sluaigh fui' aimheal buan,
'Air cuan sluathach nan tonn sgith;
'Nach do chomhraig iad an Fhiann,[45]
'Bu mhor frioth, is fiach san stri.

65 ''Se comhairle thug na sloigh,
'Air Manus mor nan long aigh;
'Tigh'nn thuige air an ais o'n chuan,
'Gu Maithibh sluaigh Innse-phail.

66 'A dubhradar ris an Riogh,
''S mor an dī dhuinn triall an diu';
'Gun chomhrag catharra, cruaidh,
'A thoirt do'n Fhiann mu'n gluais thair muir.

67 'Phill na laoich, nan caogad[46] borb,
''S bu mhor an toirm air an trai';
'Mar fhuaim tuinne bha gach treud,
'Is fathram nan cēud nar dūil.

68 'Chuir Fionn teachdaire gu luath,
'Gu Manus nan ruag, 's nan gniomh;
'C'ait am bheil do mhionnan mor,
'Fhir nach cum a choir, ach clī?

69 'Fhreagair an Triath, gu fiata, borb,
'Air am bithidh dh'colg 's gach greis;
'Dh'fhagas iad ann dealt an fheoir,
'Air an lon ud siar mu dheas.

own'. This would correspond to §§63–6. **43** Corrected in MS from *aca*. **44** Textual note: 'See this in the Mhuireartach tho' Kennedy claims it his'. The couplet in question does not appear to be represented in the ballad specified. It seems that the writer of the note confuses this with the king of Lochlann's vow to take revenge for the Muireartach's death but the wording is quite different, as exemplified by the Gillies version: 'Bheir mise briathar a ris | Ma mharbhadh am Muileartach min | Nach tog mi do Eirinn aigh | Tom, innis, no oilein' (J. Gillies (ed.), *Sean dain agus orain Ghaidhealach* (1786), p. 253). **45** Corrected in MS from *Cathair nam Fiann* (first two words scored out). **46** Corrected in MS from *caogada*.

70 'Thug sinn an sin deanal cruaidh,
'Mar nach fac, 's cha chuala' mi;
'Mar theirbirt teine na nial,
'Bha gach Triath a' sgathadh sios.

71 'Mar choill chrionaich air an
t sliabh,
''San osag dhiann ann nan car;
'B'amhail is slachdraich nan sonn,
'Bha tuiteam fui'r bonn sa chath.

72 'Thuit Manus armann an t sluaigh,
'Mar leug teine'n cuan nan sruth;
'B'an-eibhinn iolach nan laoch,
''Nuair chualas gach taobh an guth.'

Metrically, both passages present a reasonable approximation of the original *óglách*as of *rannaigheacht mhór* in the presence of end- and *aicill*-rhymes. Moreover, action and imagery are closer to the ballad idiom than to Macpherson, especially in the section from the first collection, where there is almost nothing in style or imagery that one would not expect in the ballads. The only slightly suspect reference here is to leaving the dead on the dewy grass in §68c, but this is redeemed by the following line which points out a specific location in a way that is paralleled in other ballads. *Laoidh Fhraoich*, for example, describes the place where the eponymous hero fell in combat with a monster as follows: 'Gu do thuit iad bonn re bonn | Air traidh nan clocha donn sa 'n iar'.[47] Epithets, too, are in line with ballad convention. The extract from the first collection has 'Lochlan nan colbh sean' (§63b) and '(sluagh) Mhanuis uaibhreach bhras' (§69d), and in the second collection we find 'Manus mor nan long aigh' (§65b) or the doublet 'Manus nan ruag, 's nan gniomh' (§68b) or 'Manus armann an t sluaigh' (§72a).

The couplet 'C' ait am bheil do mhionnan mór | Fagas le gó fa' r an d' fhuaras' (§67c) comes from another Mànus-ballad which tells of an expedition made to Lochlann, and Kennedy claims it as his own in error.[47a] In this second Mànus-ballad, Fionn and his men fall out with Mànus at a feast and Fionn uses this phrase to reproach the Norse king for breaking his word, given in *Laoidh Mhànuis*, that he would not fight Fionn again. The second line of the above-cited couplet is the dismissive answer given by Mànus. Kennedy reworks this line in the second edition into a continuation of Fionn's reproach: 'Fhir nach cum a choir, ach clī?' Several eighteenth-century texts of the expedition-

47 Gillies, *Sean dain*, p. 110. **47**a See *An tathach iunigh* in MacNicol's collection: Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne*, p. 84.

ballad are extant, all either incomplete or having prose passages interspersed in the verse.[48] Kennedy evidently knew this other ballad, or fragments of it, because he also gives an embellished and rather bumpy translation of the lines in question in his argument to *Laoidh Mhànuis*: 'Dost thou remember, valiant Manus, | Last day thy promising oath to all us?' | 'Most mighty Fingal, that I do, | It's left upon the mountain dew'.[49] If he got only a fragment, then he may not have realized that the line really belonged to a different text altogether and thought that he had found a stray part of *Laoidh Mhànuis*. It is also perfectly possible that he remembered, rather than composed, the couplet without realizing.

The reworked passage in the second collection contains a few 'Macpherson moments'. Pride of place goes to the line 'Mar chuilc loch Leuga bha'n aireamh' (§ 63c) which clearly takes its inspiration from *Fingal*, Book 1, where the arrival of Swaran with his fleet is described: 'His masts are as numerous on our coast as reeds in the lake of Lego'.[50] This location is frequently the scene of action in Macpherson's work and often described as 'reedy'. A passage in the argument to *Temora*, Book 7, makes the lake the scene of 'a kind of mist, which rose, by night, from the lake of Lego, and was the usual residence of the souls of the dead, during the interval between their decease and the funeral song'.[51] The image from *Fingal* resonates with the ballad idiom, while the passage from *Temora* does not, and Kennedy thus incorporated an image from an invader-context that was directly comparable to *Laoidh Mhànuis*. Kennedy's passage includes a number of other similes which employ imagery drawn from nature. These echo similar images in Macpherson, although direct correspondences are hard to find. 'Mar fhuaim tuinne bha gach treud' (§ 67c) is paralleled by a battle-description in the first book of *Fingal*: 'As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll the waves on high; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the noise of battle'.[52] 'Mar theirbirt teine na nial' (§ 70c) recalls an image like 'Fingal, like a beam from heaven' from *Fingal*, Book 4.[53] 'Mar choill chrionaich air an t sliabh | 'San osag dhiann ann nan car' (§ 71a) is reminiscent of 'Temora's woods shook with the blast of the unconstant wind' from *Temora*.[54] Finally, 'Mar leug teine'n cuan nan sruth' (§ 72b) may be an evocation of St Elmo's fire or (perhaps more likely) an image describing a meteor, for which many parallels can be found in Macpherson – for example, in *Fragments of ancient poetry*, no. 12: 'terrible as a meteor of fire'.[55] All these similes appear in passages that are either only in the second collection or have been significantly reworked from the first, indicating that Kennedy made a conscious effort to bring his material more in line with Macpherson when working on his second collection.

The majority of invader-ballads end with the death of the challenger, and in a way Kennedy has only brought his ballad in line with tradition by killing

48 R.Th. Christiansen, *The Vikings and the Viking wars in Irish and Gaelic tradition* (1931), p. 183. **49** NLS Adv. MS 72.3.9, p. 11. **50** Gaskill, *The poems of Ossian*, p. 56. **51** Ibid., p. 278. **52** Ibid., p. 60. **53** Ibid., p. 86. **54** Ibid., p. 153. **55** Ibid., p. 24.

off Mànus. On the other hand, the death of heroes is a constant feature of Macpherson's work, and it may be that a degree of influence came from there as well. That said, imitation of Macperson would probably have resulted in a much higher body-count and an extended lament for the fallen. What is definitely unusual here is that Mànus does not die in single combat with a named hero, such as Goll or Osgar. An enemy of the elevated status of a king of Lochlann would, in a passage from a fully traditional text, meet his end at the hands of an eminent adversary and with a more detailed description of the fight preceding his demise, as in the examples from *Bàs Dheirg* above.

So, did Kennedy break with accepted practice when he added to his ballads? The answer has to be both 'yes' and 'no'. The scale of his additions, however much indebted to the style and form of the ballads, is unusual in its extent, and we may suspect that it would not have gone down well in the setting of the *cèilidh*-house where faithfulness to the tradition was highly prized. As the evidence collected a century later by J.F. Campbell and his collaborators indicates,[56] reciters took great pride in recalling and preserving their texts as accurately as they could out of respect for the texts themselves and for those from whom they had learned the ballads. In this sense, Kennedy was operating against the accepted norms of an essentially conservative environment and its perceptions of literature, although his recording of the names of his sources reflects a degree of respect for tradition-bearers and their knowledge. On the other hand, he was also part of the literate, bilingual intelligentsia of the Gàidhealtachd that was beginning to make its influence felt in Gaelic literature and publishing. We may assume that Kennedy was also familiar with at least some of the work of the great innovators of Gaelic literature, Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair and Donnchadh Bàn Macintyre. The first edition of Donnchadh Bàn's poetry appeared in 1768, six years before Kennedy began his ballad collection, and it is likely that, in an environment where Macpherson's work was available, the latest publications of Gaelic poetry might be found as well. In 1790, the merchant, Duncan Kennedy, resident in Glasgow, appears on the list of subscribers to the second edition of Donnchadh Bàn's poetry, *Orain Ghaidhealach*; given our Kennedy's interest in Gaelic literature, it is likely that we are looking at the same individual here. Competent enough when it came to imitating previous examples, Kennedy's literary experimentation with the ballads, however unsuccessful in the end, fits into this context of innovative treatment of time-honoured poetic convention. Unlike Donnchadh Bàn or Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, though, he never fully found his own voice as a poet.

56 Gunderloch, 'The *Cath Gabhra* family of ballads', p. 86.

Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig: composition and transmission

Síle Ní Mhurchú

In his essay 'The development of the debate between Pádraig and Oisín', Pádraig Ó Fiannachta stated that 'while it is true that the various Fenian lays were never properly woven into a unity yet occasionally in the later manuscripts a large number of them are given continuously within the framework of "Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig"'.[1] The framework to which Ó Fiannachta referred comprises eleven lays, the first of which contains a dialogue between Oisín, an old man who has survived from the long-gone time of the *fianna*, and St Patrick. Patrick attempts to convert the reluctant Oisín to Christianity and his attitude to Oisín's reminiscing about the adventures, interests and customs of the *fianna* alternates between disdain and fascination. The title *Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig* (*AOP*) has been used in a number of ways: as well as referring to the framework of lays described by Ó Fiannachta, it has been used as the title of the initial lay of that sequence. To avoid confusion, that initial lay will be referred to here by its first line, that is, 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan'. The other usage of *AOP*, as a generic name for *fiannaigheacht* lays, will not be adopted here.

Outline of *Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig*

This description is based on the copy of *AOP* preserved in Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Irish MS 10,[2] written by Mícheál Ó hArragáin, in Co. Kerry, in 1800.[3] In this copy, as in other early copies, the text is written as one continuous piece. However, in many of the later manuscripts, the text is divided and titles are given to the various divisions. The same will be done in

1 'The development of the debate between Pádraig and Oisín' in B. Almqvist et al. (eds), *Fiannaíocht* (1987), pp 183–205 at p. 183. **2** Described in P. de Brún, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge* (1988), pp 12–13. **3** This copy provides a complete and clearly written example of *AOP* as it first appears in manuscripts from Cos. Kerry and Clare in the latter half of the eighteenth century. References to the length of the lays and all stanzas from *AOP* cited in this essay are based on this manuscript copy, unless otherwise indicated. I have produced an edition of *AOP* as part of my doctoral thesis ('*Agallamh Oisín agus Phádraig*: téacs agus tráchtaireacht', National University of Ireland, Galway). My edition is accompanied by a description of later, expanded versions of *AOP* and by a discussion of other versions and copies of the lay 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', both earlier and later than the first copy of *AOP*.

this discussion for ease of reference. The table below summarizes the contents of *AOP*.

	Title/first line of lay	*No. of stanzas*	*Summary of contents*
1	'A Oisín, is fada do shuan'	167	Oisín and Patrick argue about the relative merits of the wild, exuberant life of the *fianna* and those of the ascetic, penitential way of life of Patrick and his followers.
2	*Cath Chnoic an Áir*	76	Oisín tells Patrick how the *fianna* gave battle to Tailc mac Treoin and his army at the request of Niamh Nuachrothach who had been promised in marriage to Tailc against her will.
3	*Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*	230	A warrior named Meargach arrives and seeks to avenge the death of Tailc mac Treoin who was killed by the *fianna* at the end of the previous lay.
4	*Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal*	91	Áille arrives and laments her husband, Meargach, and two sons who were killed by the *fianna* as narrated in *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*. The lament is followed by a battle between Áille's troops and the *fianna* under the command of Fionn's wife, Gráinne.
5	*Anmanna na laochra do thit ar Chnoc an Áir*	16	Oisín tells Patrick of some of the warriors who were killed in the preceding battles at Cnoc an Áir.
6	*Anmanna na ngadhar is na gcon*	39	Oisín tells Patrick the names of the dogs and hounds that accompanied the *fianna* on a hunt that took place after the *fianna* left Cnoc an Áir.
7	*Laoi na seilge*	37	Patrick and Oisín debate; they argue about who is better – God and the clergy or Fionn and the *fianna*.
8	*Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*	81	Oisín recounts how Fionn was turned temporarily into a weak, old man after retrieving a lost gold ring from a lake at the request of a woman.

9	*Meisce agus rá na mban*	127	Oisín recounts how a woman with a magic cloak revealed the infidelity of many of the women of the *fianna*.
10	*Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid*	190	Fionn, Dáire and, later, the rest of the *fianna* are captured by Áille's brother, Draoigantóir, to avenge the killing of Meargach and his sons in *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*.
11	*Aithrí agus bás Oisín*	62	Patrick and Oisín argue and Oisín is manipulated into repenting for his sins just before his death.

Structure and content of AOP

An examination of the structure of *AOP* suggests that it is not merely an aggregation of lays tacked together with nothing more in common than the *fiannaigheacht* background in which they are set. I will argue that the lays of *AOP* were carefully woven into a consistent whole.

The debate between Patrick and Oisín found in 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' is long and meandering. It revolves around, from Oisín's point of view, whether he should accept Patrick's religion or not and, from Patrick's point of view, whether Oisín will go to heaven or hell. This necessitates comparing the life and actions of the *fianna* with those of Patrick's clergy and comparing the leadership qualities of Fionn with those of God and Christ. I would argue that the interest of this lay lies less in the resolution of the dilemma than in the dynamics of the debate, as Oisín and Patrick attempt to outdo each other in their arguments. The tone of the debate is varied. At times, the quarrelling becomes quite venomous, as in this example of a stanza addressed by Oisín to Patrick:

> Más imeacht dhóibh, nár fhágthar tusa,
> A fhir chráibhthidh an toirmiscthe;
> Dá maireadh Fionn im chomhdháil,
> Ní léigfeadh leat do chiarsán.[4]

If they go, may you not remain, | o pious, obstructive man; | if Fionn were here with me, | he would not allow you your grumbling.

In other places, Oisín is more open to Patrick's teachings:

> Innis dom fós, gan imreasán,
> Créad an fáth 'nar ghnáth leo
> Bheith ag bualadh a n-uchta gach uair
> 'S ag sléachtain fó thrua gach neoin.[5]

4 Harvard, Irish MS 10, §74. **5** Ibid., §143.

> Tell me furthermore, without strife, | the reason they [Patrick's clergy] are wont | to strike their chests every hour | and prostrate themselves wretchedly every afternoon.

Some of the stanzas are not without comic effect, such as this one where Oisín, who has previously expressed his hatred of the clergy's chanting, now produces a rather humorous image of men literally chanting up towards the sky:

> Innis dom arís is ná can gó,
> An é ábhar a n-uaillghlór ós ard,
> Fhaid atá Dia ós bhur gcionn,
> Nó an ait Leis cantlamh is gláimh?[6]
>
> Tell me again with no word of a lie, | is the reason for their [the clergy's] out-loud wailing sound, | the distance God is above you, | or does He like sorrow and clamouring?

Oisín frequently lapses into melancholia as he compares his present state with the life that was:

> Ní hiongnadh mé gan ghreann gan chroí,
> An tan smaoinim ar na fir do bhí garbh,
> Ar easpa catha, bídh agus dí,
> Trí neithe riamh do chleachtainn.[7]
>
> No wonder I am mirthless and disheartened, | when I think of the men who were rough [the *fianna*], | lacking battle, food and drink, | three things I was always accustomed to.

There is a similar ebb and flow to Patrick's attitudes towards Oisín. He reminds Oisín of the wretchedness of Oisín's present state:

> Tuig, a thruáin is saobh ciall,
> Gur imigh do rian is do lúth,
> Triall don úir gur gearr uait,
> Is ná béarfa tú bua air siúd.[8]
>
> Pitiful man whose sense is perverse, understand | that your vigour and agility have gone, | that you will soon go to the grave, | and that you will not escape that.

Patrick alternates between despairing at Oisín and becoming frustrated at Oisín's stubbornness:

6 Ibid., §145. **7** Ibid., §14. **8** Ibid., §115.

Gráin ort, a sheanóir léith,
Nách tuigeann gurab é rí naomh é
Do thugadh biadh d'Fhionn féin
Is d'Fhiannaibh Éireann uile.[9]

Shame on you, grey old man, | who does not understand that it was the king of saints [God] | who gave food to Fionn himself | and to all the *Fianna Éireann*.

Yet, at times, Patrick appears to take an interest in the *fianna* and asks Oisín to tell him more about them:

A Oisín, is binn linn do ghlór,
Beannacht fós ar anmain Fhinn,
Is aithris dúinn cá mhéid fia
Do thit ar Shliabh na mBan bhFionn.[10]

Oisín, your voice is melodious to us, | a blessing furthermore on Fionn's soul, | and recount to us how many deer | fell on Sliabh na mBan bhFionn.

Looking at *AOP* as a whole, there are links between the lays of *AOP* in terms of content and form. *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal*, *Anmanna na laochra* and *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid* all deal with the repercussions of the battle of Cnoc an Áir.[11] Although the *fianna* emerge unharmed after the events of *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid*, Oisín claims that they were never strong afterwards in battle and that this is what led to their demise rather than some action on the part of God. While the recounting of *Cath Chnoic an Áir* and of the developments that follow it allows Oisín to boast about the valour of the *fianna* and bask in their past glories, it does not function as a mere tangent to the debate begun in 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' but brings Oisín right back to the crux of the argument – the *fianna* are gone but are they in heaven or hell and in which will Oisín himself end up?

After *Anmanna na laochra*, the focus of *AOP* shifts momentarily from matters of military prowess and the events at Cnoc an Áir to other occupations of the *fianna*: courting, hunting, feasting, and so on. *Anmanna na gcon*, which may have been placed together with *Anmanna na laochra* because of their shared list-structure, is an exuberant celebration of hunting. Many of the names of the dogs are based on qualities, actions and sounds associated with hunting and the listing of their names in this lay provides a volley of impressions that a person might experience at a hunt. In *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*, Fionn is beguiled by a beautiful woman, and *Meisce is rá na mban* tells of the boasting of the women of the *fianna* after they

9 Ibid., §89. **10** Ibid., §119. **11** For the history of these lays in the manuscripts see below.

have become intoxicated with drink. These lays are entertaining in their own right, but they are not digressions from the main debate of *AOP*: they provide an opportunity for Oisín and Patrick to debate their different worldviews. The appreciation of Fionn and the *fianna* for the physical pleasures of life is frequently contrasted with the asceticism of Patrick's clergy with comic effect.

There is an attempt in *AOP* to join to the chronology of the battles at Cnoc an Áir some of the lays that do not deal with the repercussions of these battles. Oisín informs Patrick that the *fianna* went on a hunting expedition at Loch Léin after the battles at Cnoc an Áir. *Anmanna na gcon* provides the names of the dogs that accompanied the *fianna* at this hunt. *Laoi na seilge* is introduced by Patrick requesting that Oisín tell him about this hunt at Loch Léin, but the two end up debating instead. Finally, in *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*, Oisín gives an account of the hunt at Loch Léin. However, this idea of a timeline is not developed fully. For example, it is not made explicit how *Meisce is rá na mban* might fit into it. Fionn's wife in *Meisce is rá na mban* is Mághnaois, whom he kills when he learns of her infidelity; in *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal* (and, thus, one might assume, in the other lays that take place upon Cnoc an Áir), his wife is Gráinne. Those who compiled *AOP* and comprised its early audiences or readership would undoubtedly have been familiar with *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* which begins with Fionn grieving for his dead wife, Mághnaois, and in which he is subsequently betrothed to Gráinne.[12] It seems possible, then, that *Meisce is rá na mban* would have been seen as taking place earlier in time than the lays pertaining to Cnoc an Áir. Both *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and *Meisce is rá na mban* locate Fionn at Almha and start with the appearance of a mysterious female – a woman disguised as a deer in *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and a woman bearing a magic cloak in *Meisce is rá na mban*. It may be due to these similarities that the two lays are placed one after another in *AOP*.

Laoi na seilge and *Aithrí agus bás Oisín* are mostly made up of dialogue between Oisín and Patrick, similar to 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and expanding upon some of the points raised there. There are similar, long sequences of debate between Oisín and Patrick in the middle of the narrative lays *Cath Chnoic an Áir*, *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid*. There are sequences of ten stanzas of debate between Oisín and Patrick in *Cath Chnoic an Áir*, thirty-eight in *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, fourteen and subsequently nine in *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*, and eighty-one in *Meisce is rá na mban*. *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal* and *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid* lack such sequences of dialogue but, as a whole, *AOP* begins, ends and is frequently punctuated with bouts of debate between Oisín and Patrick.

AOP is framed by Oisín's awakening at the beginning and his death at the end. 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' (and, thus, *AOP*) begins with Patrick exhorting

12 N. Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (1967), p. 2ff. The subsequent fates of the Gráinne of *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* and the Gráinne of *AOP* differ greatly, however.

Oisín to get up and listen to the psalms and thus begins the debate between the two. Unlike *Acallam na senórach*, where the meeting of Caoilte and Patrick is depicted and a justification is made of the value of preserving tales of pagan times,[13] in *AOP* Oisín and Patrick are already aware of each others' opposing views on life (even if both often fail to appreciate the subtleties of their opponent's argument) and they begin to bicker and disagree almost at once. *Aithrí agus bás Oisín*, in which Patrick tricks Oisín into asking for forgiveness, closes *AOP*. Here, Patrick asks a servant to slap Oisín and Oisín, fearing that this is death approaching, asks for repentance. He dies, absolved, soon afterwards.[14] This is not a very convincing repentance or assurance that Oisín ended up in heaven, for Oisín often comes close to accepting Christianity in his debates with Patrick only to change his mind suddenly as he remembers the glories of his past life with the *fianna*. It seems likely, then, that, had Oisín lived longer, he would have turned against Patrick again. Overall, however, *AOP* is more concerned with the process of argument and the battle of wits involved in this process than with the end-result.

This resumé does not do full justice to the structure of *AOP*, but I hope to have shown that it is a consistent and skilfully woven text. The matters raised in the first lay, 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', are explored more fully in the lays that follow. Most of the narrative lays are structured into a chronology that goes from the military triumphs at Cnoc an Áir to the unspecified demise of the *fianna* after *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid* (echoed by Oisín's decline from the glorious hero of his memories to his state as a weak and blind old man). Some of the lays may have been put together because of similarities of form (e.g., listing) and content. There are frequent, long sequences of debate between Oisín and Patrick throughout *AOP* that give a consistent tone to the whole. Finally, the debate itself is framed by Oisín's awakening at the beginning and his death at the end.

Sources

The earliest copy of *AOP* is that contained in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 C 15 (377), written by Risteárd Ó Ciosáin, in the years 1775–81, in Co. Kerry.[15] Some of the lays of *AOP* are found independently in earlier manuscripts: these are *Cath Chnoic an Áir*, *Laoi na seilge*, *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and *Meisce agus rá na mban*. The earliest copy of *Cath Chnoic an Áir* is in the Giessen Irish manuscript of 1684.[16] The earliest copy of *Laoi na seilge* and *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*[17] is

13 W. Stokes (ed. and [partial] trans.), '*Acallamh na senórach*' in W. Stokes & E. Windisch (eds), *Irische Texte*, iv.1 (1900), pp 1–438 at ll. 58–78 and 290–318. **14** Although the manner in which Oisín is brought to repent is humorous, the final stanzas in *AOP* see Patrick giving a sincere verbal *memento mori* – again, this is typical of the mix of humour and solemnity that is found throughout *AOP*. **15** T.F. O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, 28 fasc. (1926–58), viii, pp 1028–30. **16** L.Chr. Stern, 'Notice d'un manuscrit irlandais de la Bibliothèque Universitaire de Giessen', *Revue celtique*, 16 (1895), 28–9. **17** They are written as one lay here and in many other manuscripts. The narrative of

in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Irish f. 1, written between 1733 and 1736.[18] The earliest copy of *Meisce agus rá na mban*, usually called *Laoi an bhrait* when found outside of *AOP*, is in the early sixteenth-century Book of the Dean of Lismore.[19]

Of particular interest here is that these lays, as they appear in *AOP*, are slightly different to, and longer than, the versions of the same lays found independently of it. The versions of these lays in *AOP* show signs of having been altered to fit the structure of that work. For example, the *AOP* versions of *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and *Meisce agus rá na mban* have long sequences of debate between Oisín and Patrick, whereas the independent versions are mostly narrative. These extra sequences of debate may have been added to the *AOP* versions in order to anchor them into the overall debate between Oisín and Patrick. Some of these stanzas of debate are also to be found in other, earlier versions of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and in other *fiannaigheacht* lays, but most make their appearance for the first time in the earliest copies of *AOP*.

There are other differences between the independent versions of these lays and those in *AOP*. The narrative part of *Meisce agus rá na mban*, in particular, is expanded in the *AOP* version. In the independent lay, the women, one by one, don the cloak that will reveal whether they have been faithful to their husbands: the testing of Conán's wife, for example, is dealt with concisely in three stanzas.[20] This incident is expanded to nine stanzas, with Conán's wife attempting to deny the verdict of the magic cloak, in the long version of *Meisce agus rá na mban* that is found in *AOP*. In both versions, other women of the *fianna* also try on the cloak; again, the long, *AOP* version provides more detail about the characters' reactions to the cloak's revelations. Donald Meek, in his discussion on the growth of this lay, argues that the changes to *Meisce is rá na mban* (*Laoi an bhrait*) 'can scarcely be said to improve the plot or structure of the earliest extant text of the poem'.[21] I would say that these new stanzas are not without interest; the fact that they were developed shows that the imagined licentiousness of the *fianna* and their women was a point of interest and a source of amusement. However, it is hard to say whether these changes to *Meisce is rá na mban* were made in order to fit this lay into the framework of *AOP*; the same applies to the minor differences in plot between the versions of *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* found in *AOP* and without.

Most of *AOP* consists of material not found in any source earlier than the earliest manuscript copy of *AOP*. The lays *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, *Caoineadh Áille*

Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn can be traced back further to a story told in prose and verse in the late medieval *Feis tighe Chonáin*. See M. Joynt (ed.), *Feis tighe Chonáin* (1936), pp 34–40. **18** B. Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish language manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford college libraries*, 2 vols (2001), i, pp 47–53. **19** See E. Mac Neill & G. Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn*, 3 vols (1908–53), iii, pp 153–61, for further discussion on the history and possible sources of *Laoi an bhrait*. **20** See, for example, Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, p. 332, §§8–10. **21** 'Development and degeneration in Gaelic ballad texts' in Almqvist et al., *Fiannaíocht*, pp 131–60 at p. 159.

Shnuagheal, *Anmanna na laochra*, *Anmanna na gcon*, *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid* and *Aithrí agus bás Oisín* make their earliest appearance in copies of *AOP* and subsequently appear only within the context of that work.[22] These lays account for 628 stanzas of the 1,116 stanzas of *AOP* and are in modern language. It is almost certain that they were performed orally before being written down.[23] In the absence of other sources for these lays, their form before their incorporation into the framework of *AOP* must remain speculative. However, it does not seem improbable that, like the narrative lays in *AOP* for which there are earlier sources, the long sequences of dialogue between Oisín and Patrick contained in these lays were added after the narrative was composed and with the aim of anchoring them into *AOP*.

The history of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' is more complicated than that of the other lays in *AOP*. There are many different versions of this lay, both earlier and later than the *AOP* version, and these differ considerably in length. The earliest extant copy of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' is in *Duanaire Finn* (1627) and is thirty-nine stanzas long.[24] A few copies similar to the *Duanaire Finn* copy exist, but most are longer.[25] The lay was lengthened by the addition of similar fragments of material attributed to Oisín and Patrick, some of which are preserved independently in other manuscripts while others may have existed orally before they were added to 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan'. The lay was also extended by the elaboration of existing stanzas. Because the debate between Patrick and Oisín is meandering, the addition of material from different sources generally does not interrupt the flow of the lay and two manuscript copies that contain the same stanzas in a different order can both make sense. That said, the flow of the stanzas in some versions of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' appears somewhat interrupted in places, giving a glimpse of the process of recomposition, whether from oral or written sources.

The version of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' found in *AOP*, which is 167 stanzas long, contains 27½ stanzas that are also found in the *Duanaire Finn* text. A further 37 stanzas are found in other versions of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' that predate the earliest copy of *AOP*. A few individual stanzas are found in the Book of the Dean of Lismore (1512–42) and the Giessen Irish manuscript (1684). Some of these stanzas seem to have been reworked and are in a different context in *AOP*. 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' in *AOP* contains 102½ unparallelled stanzas in all, and it is

22 An exception to this rule is CUL, Add. MS 6485, penned by Standish Hayes O'Grady at an unspecified date in the nineteenth century: P. de Brún & M. Herbert, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in Cambridge libraries* (1986), pp 59–60. This version contains thirty-three stanzas of *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal* alone. The battle between Gráinne and Áille that follows the lament is missing. Here, *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal* is presented in the context of a collection of Irish songs. **23** See H. Shields, *Narrative singing in Ireland* (1993), pp 1–33, on the performance of *fiannaigheacht* lays. **24** Mac Neill & Murphy, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, pp 204–15. **25** These are: RIA MSS 23 L 34, 23 O 35, 23 L 7 and 24 P 7; NLI MSS G 38, G 133, G 137 and G 482; BL Add. MS 18749; NUIG Hyde MSS 9 and 66; TCD MS 1415; Belfast, Public Library, MS 40; Armagh, Coláiste Phádraig, MS 3b.

difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether these were composed to be inserted into the framework of *AOP* or came from an earlier source/earlier sources.[26]

Manuscript copies of AOP

I have identified some seventy-five manuscript texts of *AOP*. Seventeen of these fall under the description of *AOP* given above.[27] A further twenty-four copies contain a substantial proportion of *AOP*, with the lays following the same order as found in the earliest copy. Some of the latter are shorter due to missing leaves at the beginning or end of the text; in other cases, it appears that the scribes were drawing on incomplete sources of *AOP*. There are a further twenty-five manuscripts in which all, or a substantial portion, of *AOP* is to be found. In these, the lays are in a different order to that described above and some have other *fiannaigheacht* lays interspersed among the lays of the *AOP*. Ó Fiannachta described these arrangements of lays as being 'sometimes inspired more by scribal convenience than literary architectonics'.[28] Indeed, some of these manuscripts appear to be hastily gathered collections, and they sometimes contain multiple, different versions of the same lay. Others show a more artful selection with additional lays being woven into *AOP* in a manner similar to that in which *AOP* itself was compiled. One example of the latter process is a group of nine manuscripts[29] where the lays *Cath an bháis*, *Cath na suirí*, *Laoi na mná móire*, *Seilg toirc Ghleanna an Scáil* and *Laoi Chab an Dosáin* were inserted into the body of *AOP* by means of stanzas of dialogue between Oisín and Patrick. This extended version of *AOP* seems to have been confined to North Cork, for the most part.[30] Each manuscript copy of these texts or collections of texts ought to be judged on its own merits; even the most seemingly disorganized collections of lays provide valuable witness to the proliferation and variety of the *fiannaigheacht* lays circulating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To complicate matters further, other versions of the lay 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', besides that of *AOP*, were circulating contemporaneously. Some of these were also associated with other lays and woven into longer texts.[31] A good example of this is provided by a group of six manuscripts[32] that contain a bipar-

26 The last two stanzas of the *AOP* version of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' provide an introduction to the lay that follows (*Cath Chnoic an Áir*) and were, almost certainly, composed for *AOP*. **27** Ó Fiannachta, 'The development of the debate', p. 202, mentions, but does not name, 'about seventeen surviving manuscripts' where the debate between Oisín and Patrick is used as a means of presenting other lays in a unified manner. **28** Ibid., p. 183. **29** These are: RIA MSS 23 D 18, 23 K 18 and 24 P 11; NLI MS G 325 and G 659; Limerick, Bishop of Limerick's Residence, MSS J and K; Mount Mellary, MS 6. **30** Seven were penned in and around Milford and in Rathcoole (in Duhollow), Co. Cork. No location is mentioned for RIA MS 24 P 11. RIA MS 23 D 18 was penned in Co. Limerick. **31** Some scribes also spliced stanzas from these other versions of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' into the 'A Oisín' of *AOP* or replaced the 'A Oisín' of *AOP* in its entirety with a different version. **32** These are Dunington

tite arrangement in which the lays *Cath an bháis*, *Cath na suirí* and *Scéal Chinn Óir mhic Chairbre* are grouped together, while a version of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' that differs from that of *AOP* is grouped with *Laoi na seilge*. These other arrangements of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and other lays do not reach the same length and are not as artful as in *AOP* and its offshoots.

Impetus for the compilation of AOP

The use of dialogue, or of a raconteur, as a framework for the gathering of various pieces of *fiannaigheacht* into a unified whole, as in *AOP*, is not without precedent: both *Acallam na senórach* and *Feis tighe Chonáin* provide examples of the same. Copies of those texts were in circulation in the eighteenth century, and it is possible that they provided inspiration for the compilation of *AOP*. The publication, in Scotland, in the 1760s, of James Macpherson's Ossianic lays precedes the earliest copy of *AOP* (1775–81), and it is possible that those who compiled *AOP* were aware of, and inspired by, the impact of Macpherson's works.[33] However, as already discussed, other versions of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' were being expanded and welded to other lays in eighteenth-century Irish manuscripts that predate Macpherson's publications.

Although *fiannaigheacht* lays were recited throughout Irish-speaking Ireland, the most elaborate manuscript compilations of lays of this period were made in Munster, where the tradition of writing and copying manuscripts was strongest at the time.[34] It may well be that the very process of writing down the lays influenced how they were laid out in the manuscripts. Those who performed and listened to the lays would have understood implicitly that the lays are narrated by Oisín long after the disappearance of the *fianna*. In other words, they would have been aware of the context of the debate between Oisín and Patrick. Moreover, they would have been familiar with *fiannaigheacht* material not only in the form of lays recounting adventures of the *fianna* and fragments of disputation between Oisín and Patrick, and so on, but also in the form of tales, proverbs, place-names and as a general frame of reference. The process of writing down the lays would have abstracted them from this context, to a degree, and forced the scribes to consider and decide upon how to present disparate,

MS 1 (in private ownership); RIA MSS 3 B 28, 23 L 5 and 23 L 8; NLI MSS G 642 and G 298. **33** Later scribes were certainly conscious of the impact of Macpherson, and there are references to the Ossianic controversy appended to some nineteenth-century manuscript copies of *AOP*. See, for example, Villanova Irish MS 3, penned by Conchubhar Ó Máille, in the years 1816–17, which contains a copy of *AOP* with a preface that refers to the Ossianic controversy: W.J. Mahon, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in Villanova University, Pennsylvania* (2007), pp 27–30. The response in Ireland to the Ossianic controversy is discussed in M. Mac Craith, '"We all know these poems": the Irish response to Ossian' in H. Gaskill (ed.), *The reception of Ossian in Europe* (2004), pp 91–108. **34** R.A. Breatnach, 'The end of a tradition: a survey of eighteenth-century Gaelic literature', *Studia Hibernica*, 1 (1961), 128–50 at 136.

yet related, pieces of verse pertaining to Oisín, Patrick and the *fianna* in the strict linear order demanded by the manuscript format.[35]

Published editions of the lays

To date, the published editions of *fiannaigheacht* lays have not provided a text of *AOP* that reflects what is found in the manuscripts. Most editions are of individual lays without exact references to the context. I will limit this discussion to the most prominent editions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Because *AOP* is a product of the scribal tradition of Munster, I will exclude discussion of Scottish editions.

A. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EDITIONS OF LAYS

In general, the eighteenth-century publications furnish only a small selection of *fiannaigheacht* lays as illustrative examples of this genre. Charles Henry Wilson's *Select Irish poems translated into English* (1782) has the short, non-*AOP* version of *Cath Chnoic an Áir*[36] in Irish and translated into English, as well as *Queen Alla's lamentation*, an English translation of *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal*.[37] Mícheál Mac Craith has seen Wilson's English version of *Cath Chnoic an Áir* as more of a recasting than a translation and observed that *Queen Alla's lamentation* bears little resemblance to *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal* apart from the title and the woman's name.[38] It appears that Wilson translated and published these lays as a response to Macpherson; he wished to claim the lays for Ireland and show Macpherson to be a mere pilferer.[39]

Joseph Cooper Walker's *Historical memoirs of the Irish bards* (1786) contains the short, non-*AOP* version of *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*. This was included in the book for 'the gratification of the Irish reader and also to serve as a specimen of the metre, diction, and prevailing poetical fictions of these ages'.[40] Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish poetry*, first published in 1789, contains specimens of various types of Irish poetry 'with a view to throw some light on the antiquities of this country, to vindicate, in part, its history, and prove its claim to scientific as well as to military fame'.[41] These include the non-*AOP* version of *Laoi na seilge* and *Seilge Sléibhe gCuilinn*, printed as one text.[42]

35 I am inspired here by ideas about the relationship between oral and written compositions as expressed by W.J. Ong, *Orality and literacy* (1982). **36** Also known as *Laoi Thailc mhic Treoin*. **37** M. Mac Craith, 'Charles Wilson (*c.*1756–1808): réamhtheachtaí Charlotte Brooke', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 17 (2002), 57–78 at 62. I would like to thank an tAthair Mícheál Mac Craith for drawing this article to my attention. **38** Ibid., 65 and 71. **39** Ibid., 69. **40** J.C. Walker, *Historical memoirs of the Irish bards* (1786), p. 111. The poem is here called *Laoi na seilge*. **41** *Reliques of Irish poetry* (1816), p. cxxxi. **42** Ibid., p. 412. The English translation, *The chase*, is on p. 85.

B. NINETEENTH-CENTURY EDITIONS

The Ossianic Society was founded in 1853 with the aim of 'printing, and preserving from destruction the poetry, and legends ascribed to Oisin and Caoilte, the ancient bards of Fenian history'.[43] Some of the lays of *AOP* were edited by John O'Daly in volumes four and six of the Society's journal, *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*. Volume four (published in 1859) contains the lays 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', *Cath Chnoic an Áir*, *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, *Anmanna na laochra*, *Anmanna na gcon* and *Laoi na seilge*,[44] as well as other *fiannaigheacht* material. Volume six (published in 1861) contains, amongst other things, *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* and *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid*. O'Daly used manuscripts as sources. His version of *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* is the shorter one found independently of *AOP*. The other lays correspond to their equivalents in *AOP*, being drawn from Cambridge, University Library, Additional MS 6559,[45] written by Mártan Ó Gríofa (Martin Griffin) of Co. Clare in 1844. Ó Gríofa's manuscript contains the full *AOP*, but O'Daly chose, as his source for 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', a copy from a manuscript by Labhrás Ó Fuartháin (Laurence O'Foran) of Co. Waterford, dated 1780. This is now Cork, University College, Irish MS 96.[46] It is not the version of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' usually found in *AOP*.

C. TWENTIETH-CENTURY EDITIONS

Leabhar na laoitheadh (1911) was edited by J.J. O'Kelly in order 'to place within the reach of young students of modern Irish, appropriate extracts from the more representative Ossianic poems that happen to be available in the modern language'.[47] He claims to have edited the material in this book 'with sympathy and care' due to his belief that 'there is much in the general body of the literature not quite intended for persons of tender years or immature judgment'.[48] This book contains only a small extract from 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan', a short *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* without debate between Oisín and Patrick, *Cath Chnoic an Áir* with the extended narrative as found in *AOP* but lacking the stanzas of debate between Oisín and Patrick, a shorter *Laoi Mheargaigh na Lann*, the lament only of *Caoineadh Áille Shnuagheal*,[49] *Seilg Sléibhe Fuaid*, *Anmanna na gcon*[50] and other lays unrelated to *AOP*.

Fian-laoithe, edited by Seosamh Laoide, was published in 1916. The editor's main motivation was his dissatisfaction with other published editions of lays.[51] Laoide's version of *Laoi na seilge/Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn* is not that of *AOP*. None of the other lays of *AOP* appear in this book.

Tadhg Ó Donnchadha, better known as Torna, in his introduction to *Filidheacht fiannaigheachta* (1933), laments how little *fiannaigheacht* poetry has been

43 J. O'Daly (ed. and trans.), *Laoithe fiannuigheachta* (1859), p. ix. **44** *Anmanna na gcon* and *Laoi na seilge* are presented as one text, under the title *Seilg Locha Léin*. **45** de Brún & Herbert, *Catalogue*, pp 79–83. **46** de Brún, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge*, p. 16. **47** *Leabhar na laoitheadh* (1911), p. lx. **48** Ibid. **49** Here called *Laoi mhná Mheargaigh*. **50** Here called *Coin na Féinne*. **51** S. Laoide, *Fian-laoithe* (1916), pp v–vii.

published or even written down and states that this impedes critical appraisal of the genre.[52] He describes *AOP* correctly as ten lays appended to the lay 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and surmises that this was done by someone in Co. Clare at the end of the eighteenth century or beginning of the nineteenth.[53] He draws on various sources, including *Transactions of the Ossianic Society* and some manuscripts.[54] Torna's 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' is not that of *AOP* and is followed, without a break, by *Laoi na seilge*. His text of *Seilg Sléibhe gCuilinn*[55] is similar to the *AOP* version. His text of *Cath Chnoic an Áir* is the short one, not usually found in *AOP*. His text entitled *Aighneas Oisín agus Phádraig* contains the stanzas of debate between Oisín and Patrick found after the narration of *Meisce is rá na mban* in *AOP*. His text *Aithrighe Oisín* corresponds to *Aithrí agus bás Oisín* of *AOP* except that the first seven stanzas are missing.

Laoithe na Féinne (1941), edited by Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (an Seabhac), was intended for the ordinary reading public rather than for scholars. His stated aim was to produce what was the best and most complete text and, in his ordering of the lays, he aimed at having a thread of continuity throughout.[56] He used manuscript sources mostly.[57] The order of the lays as found in *AOP* is followed in some cases. An Seabhac's text of 'A Oisín' contains 270 stanzas, and he uses stanzas from different sources, including the *AOP* version of this lay, and arranges them in what he considers to be a logical order. Occasionally, he provides notes explaining where the different versions diverge. In keeping with his aim of providing as complete an edition of the lays as possible, the other lays of *AOP*, as found in *Laoithe na Féinne*, contain the extra stanzas that they have in *AOP*.

Ó Fiannachta's overview of *AOP* is accurate[58] except that the version of the lay 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' he describes and quotes from differs from the usual version of this lay found in *AOP*. He also highlights the need for an 'uncluttered edition [of *AOP*] from one of the more complete copies'.[59] Such an edition, based on the manuscripts, has been the goal of my doctoral research.

Conclusion

The many and varied manuscript copies of *AOP* attest to its popularity among Irish-language scribes and owners and collectors of manuscripts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have attempted here to paint a fuller picture of *AOP* than was available previously and to explain how it was constructed by expanding on the model of the dialogue between Oisín and Patrick provided in the lay 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' and by weaving in other lays and segments of verse from various sources. As one of the major works of the later development of the *fiannaigheacht* cycle, *AOP* surely deserves greater recognition than it has hitherto been accorded.

52 *Filidheacht fiannaigheachta* (1933), p. 12. **53** Ibid., p. 10. **54** Ibid., pp 205–6. **55** Here called *Laoi na seilge*. **56** *Laoithe na Féinne* (1941), pp vii–viii. **57** Ibid., pp 314–17. **58** 'The development of the debate', pp 195–202. Ó Fiannachta based his description of 'A Oisín, is fada do shuan' on John O'Daly's text in *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*. **59** Ibid., p. 202.

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Contributors

Sharon J. Arbuthnot is an assistant editor at eDIL at Queen's University Belfast. Her principal research interests lie in the areas of lexicography and medieval Isidorian etymology, compiled texts and the compilatory process, and *fianaigecht* literature.

Caoimhín Breatnach MRIA is a senior lecturer in the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics in University College Dublin. His main area of expertise is the language and literature of the Classical Modern Irish period (1200–1650).

Ann Dooley is Professor at the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, and with the Celtic Studies Program at St Michael's College, University of Toronto, where she specializes in Irish literature. Her research focuses on medieval Irish secular and religious literature in Irish and Latin with emphasis on bardic verse and medieval Irish narrative.

Anja Gunderloch is a lecturer in Celtic in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include Gaelic heroic ballads, the manuscripts of Gaelic Scotland, Scottish Gaelic poetry before 1900, the work and times of Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir, and the Isle of Man.

Kaarina Hollo is a lecturer in Irish at the University of Sheffield. Her main areas of research include the literary culture of early medieval Ireland and literary translation in the Irish context, from the eighteenth century to the present.

Julia S. Kühns completed her M.Phil. (2006) and PhD (2009) in the Department of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow. She now lives in Melbourne, Australia, where she continues to work and research as an independent scholar.

Mícheál Mac Craith is a Franciscan priest who has just retired as Professor of Modern Irish at National University of Ireland, Galway. He is now Guardian of Collegio S. Isidoro, Rome.

Kim McCone is a classics graduate of Oxford University, where he also took a D.Phil. in the field of comparative Celtic and Indo-European linguistics. He retired recently from the Chair of Medieval Irish at National University of Ireland (formerly St Patrick's College), Maynooth, which he had held for twenty-eight years, and is the author of a number of books and articles on literary as well as linguistic topics relating to Medieval Irish and Celtic studies.

Kevin Murray is a lecturer in the Department of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork.

Joseph Falaky Nagy is a Professor in the Department of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has written books and articles on the medieval and modern story tradition centered on Finn; medieval Celtic literatures; and comparative mythology.

Síle Ní Mhurchú holds a BA in Irish and French from University College Cork and was awarded a scholarship by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) to carry out her doctoral research on the Fenian lays at National University of Ireland, Galway.

Ruairí Ó hUiginn is Professor of Modern Irish at National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He previously has worked at the universities of Uppsala, Galway, Bonn and at Queen's University, Belfast. Among his research interests are the historical syntax of the Celtic languages, the literature of the Ulster and Fenian Cycles and Irish place- and personal names.

Geraldine Parsons is a lecturer in Celtic and Gaelic, Sgoil nan Daonnachdan/School of Humanities, University of Glasgow. Previously, she held a Title A Fellowship in Trinity College Cambridge.

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